# WRESTLING FLYER INTERVIEW COLLECTION #3

PO BOX 283, WALLINGFORD, PA 19086 $10 BY EDITOR JOHN CLARK

TOO COLD SCORPIO (P.2)
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This is the final issue ever of the Wrestling Flyer Newsletter, which began publishing in February 1992. 38 issues were produced and the interviews printed in them are compiled in the three interview collections described above. For those who are owed money by me for future issues that were paid for, a note is enclosed along with this book regarding your reimbursement and all accounts will be settled properly and fairly. For those who owe me money for this final book, a note is made of such. Thank you very much to everyone who supported this newsletter by subscribing to it and to those who helped with the content of it in any way. THANK YOU.

# TOO COLD SCORPIO

The following interview with Too Cold Scorpio (Charles Scaggs), 28, was conducted via telephone from his home near Atlanta, Georgia, on May 1, 1994. Scorpio was fired from World Championship Wrestling in the middle of April and wants to work mainly in foreign countries but is also currently working select United States independents including recent matches for ECW with Sabu, which thrilled Scorpio.

**John Clark:** Could you go through with me the process of how you got into the professional wrestling business?

**Too Cold Scorpio:** When I first got into it a friend of mine named Jeff Gold, otherwise known as Magic Michael Starr, had talked me into going down and watching practice. I always liked wrestling and I always watched it on TV. Finally, one day I went down there and I saw what he was doing. I got in and I tried it and I liked it, and I asked him, "Hey, do you get paid for doing this?" And he said yes. So I just kind of picked up and took off from there working the little independents around. I taught myself. As I was doing independents I got spotted by Vader, who liked my style and who always told me for a couple years that he could get me over to Japan. So finally when he did about three years later, he got me over to Japan, and I went over there in a junior tournament on a two week, two and a half weeks deal, I did fairly good, not too bad. Out of the whole deal, New Japan asked me to come back and asked if I would train in the dojo and be trained by them for a while because they thought that I had potential and that they could probably use me later on in the future. So Vader was actually the one that really got me the big push with going to Japan. From Japan I went to Mexico. Of course it was Vader and also another guy named Black Cat out of New Japan Pro Wrestling that hooked me up with Mexico. I was wrestling down in the Mexican organization for about four or five months and just doing a few little independents that were still around. Then when I came back I hooked up with WCW also through Big Van Vader.

**Clark:** When actually did you start out in the wrestling business?

**Scorpio:** I started out in the wrestling business about '87, '88, right around in there.

**Clark:** What were you doing for a living before entering wrestling?

**Scorpio:** Actually I was a handy man. I was installing carpets and I was painting and I also was a certified chef. So I was doing just about a little bit of everything basically to get the bills paid.

**Clark:** So would you say that getting into wrestling was an exciting transition for you?

**Scorpio:** Actually it kind of was because when I was in wrestling I always had the people oohing and aahing and I've always been a fan favorite from day one that I ever got into the sport. And not really having any training as I always taught myself, it was real exciting.

**Clark:** So you weren't really officially trained by anybody?

**Scorpio:** No, I wasn't. The most training I got was the eight months of training when I stayed in Japan.

**Clark:** Who were some of the performers in wrestling that you admired or tried to emulate while you were starting out in this profession?

**Scorpio:** I always admired the high-flyers. Greg Gagne, Jumpin Jim Brunzell, Superfly Snuka. Those guys were really some of the top guys that I liked watching wrestle. Superfly in general because he came off the top with the splash and off the cage. When I was growing up I always said, "Man, I would love to break his record off the top of the cage." So that was one of the great times. Just watching some of the old-time wrestlers overall, Jesse The Body and some of the other guys, it was just something I've always wanted to do. And to get in there and get paid for actually going out there and kicking butt, it was great.

**Clark:** How exactly did you go about training and learning the things you needed to know to make it in this business?

**Scorpio:** It was my friend Magic Michael Starr who talked me into going. All I did was just sit back and watch everything on TV and then I would go out and do it in the backyard. I knew how everything looked and how it was applied and how it should have went. Going down the line through my matches in the independents I ran into a couple of the old-timers and worked with Colonel DeBeers, Playboy Buddy Rose, and even Jumpin Jim Brunzell and B. Brian Blair. Also a lot of these guys had seen some stuff I did and would correct me and say, "Okay, you should do this like this or this like this." Just little things that a lot of the guys told me I kind of stuck it and put it in my head and kind of went back and worked with that. Never really having a ring, it was always either outside on the grass or in empty apartments, because I was a painter so we would find an empty apartment and go bump around for an hour or so and then finish up the paint job.

**Clark:** How did you go about learning and becoming successful at all the innovative moves you perform in the ring, such as the flips off the ropes?

**Scorpio:** When I was younger I used to always jump on the trampoline at the recreation center, growing up in the projects. And it just kind of like stuck with me.

**Clark:** Where did you grow up?

**Scorpio:** That was in Denver, Colorado. I was born in Texas and raised in Colorado.

**Clark:** How would you describe the conditions and the financial situation working for Mexico and Japan?

**Scorpio:** In my situation financially I think it was fairly good. The economy is real low in Mexico while the economy's fairly high in Japan, but the rate that they were paying me I think was fairly good. I mean I don't think it was quite what I deserved, but then again I was also still in my learning process. I was still green to the business. I would say the pay rate in Mexico was fairly decent. It wouldn't be nothing that you would make in the States, but then again it wasn't bad if you could make a living on it.

**Clark:** What kind of a hands-on wrestling education did you have working in Japan and Mexico and how that relates to the style of wrestling you have chosen to utilize in your work?

**Scorpio:** It was more or less that I taught myself and I know a lot of the fundamentals. I think just with the common sense and the will and the ability to want to learn really helped me out a lot. It gave me that extra incentive to get something done. Being in a different country that I've never been in, there by myself where nobody speaks English at all, that was an expereience in itself. I think just with the common sense and the politeness was what really helped me get through all of it, being how I didn't even speak the language.

**Clark:** Did you find yourself looking towards putting together a flurry of hot moves more so than working out a storyline and understanding the psychology of a wrestling match when you were training and working in those foreign countries?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, everything was a high spot. Everything was a spot. As I went on I learned more of how to tell a story and more of learning how to work one part and stay on the part. It really was a learning experience to slow me down.

**Clark:** Did you change that approach at all when you went to WCW and was anyone there for you in that company to help you with understanding the match psychology?

**Scorpio:** Actually when I went there I just kind of felt everything out. I was still real close with Vader. I asked him basically how it was working because I was so used to working the Japanese style and the Mexican style that I was not used to working the American style. When I came in I was a little bit quick and wanted to do a lot more high spots than what people were used to seeing and couldn't really keep up with everything. So I tried to learn to slow it down and do a minimum of things so that way people could kind of catch up and remember what was what when I did it. It really helped me a lot talking to Vader, Flyin Brian, Marcus, Sting, and a few of the other guys. Ron Simmons was a big help too. He used to watch a lot of my matches and just coach me along and tell me what was what. Also a man that was on me real hard about a lot of stuff I did in the ring and I guess kind of pushed me to perfect everything was Bill Watts. He was real hard and when I came in he was hard on me, but I appreciate him for that because he kind of gave me more of a respect for the sport.

**Clark:** Coming from that tougher style and the rugged training over in Japan, did you find it tough to adjust working in the United States?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, because going from Mexico to Japan is a different style. Moves change and the way that you put a hold on changes completely too. Japan was more of a shoot style type wrestling, you know, submission type holds. Here a lot of the guys don't understand submission type holds. I would put them on a guy and a lot of guys wouldn't know it and then if I put it on too hard, then the guy was ready to quit. So it really took me a while to adapt because I was so used to the "fight for what you know" style.

**Clark:** How would you describe your level of experience in wrestling when you arrived at WCW and do you think you've improved in any way from being with that company?

**Scorpio:** Yes, I do think I improved a whole lot. I've learned to slow it down and I've learned how to respect and learn how to tell more of a story. I've learned how to work more as a tag team partner although I was so used to working six man tag team matches. With tag teams it wasn't really all that hard to adjust to. I guess it was just having the right partner to adjust to.

**Clark:** How did you get the break with WCW and debut at their Clash of the Champions in November 1992? I mean, had you contacted their office looking for a job?

**Scorpio:** Big Van Vader, when Watts was in office, said that he had a black guy with the talent that could do all that flipping and stuff. So finally I sent him a tape. The tape sat around the office for a while. Magnum T.A. never did take the tape to him. Leon (Vader) just happened to be in the office one day asking Watts if he had looked at the videotape. And he said that he had never seen it. So Watts went and dug up the tape and watched it, seen the moves and liked what he saw and gave me a call. After that I was probably down in WCW within the next two or three weeks. It was a real fast process but it was mostly because of Leon and Watts.

**Clark:** What expectations did you have for yourself at WCW after debuting there?

**Scorpio:** When I came I thought I was going to probably be a singles man. I thought that there should have been no way possible that I shouldn't have been a TV title holder or that I shouldn't have been the U.S. heavyweight champion. My expectations was always to have some kind of a belt. I didn't think I was quite heavy enough maybe to have the heavyweight belt but I knew just with my style alone that I could probably keep up with the heavyweight champion if it came down to that. But as far as all the other belts, I thought I should have had one.

**Clark:** Did you enjoy working under Bill Watts for the few months that he was in charge when you were new at WCW?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I did enjoy working under Bill Watts. Like I said, he was hard and kind of rough and strict, but then again he kind of makes you respect the sport a little bit more.

**Clark:** In your opinion, how has the company changed since you went there under Bill Watts compared to the condition it is in now under the direction of Eric Bischoff?

**Scorpio:** I think it's changed some but it really hasn't changed a whole lot. I think it has changed a little bit for the better. Things are kind of going up. But then again it all depends if everybody in the office wants to work together. It just depends on who likes who and what's what. But I think it has improved some quite a bit. Ratings did go up some, which is the main thing always. Overall, I always get along with pretty much anybody and everybody. I don't have any problems with getting along with anybody, so that's not really an issue there.

**Clark:** From your experience being at WCW recently, do you think they're headed in the right direction?

**Scorpio:** I think it basically is going in the right direction. Me, myself, I think there's a lot of guys that have been around and been in the office and been in the driver's seat several times and never really had gotten the job done. I think it's really time that maybe some of them guys just step down and let some of the other guys that do have a good idea go ahead and do it. The thing is, a lot of people are still kind of stuck into the olden days style of wrestling and they've got to remember this is the 90s. It's time for a new flavor and a lot of the guys that you see now have been around for a long time. In my own opinion, it's kind of holding back some of the young talent that they've got out there.

**Clark:** Do you think Eric Bischoff is the guy that's going to be able to take WCW in the right direction?

**Scorpio:** Eric Bischoff has a pretty good chance. He's a pretty strong guy, but the thing is that he's got a lot of people under him with a lot of ideas and when you've got ninety million people pushing ninety million different ideas in your head, it's hard to say what direction you're going to go in. If he takes his time and he makes the right decisions and he goes with what he thinks is best instead of what somebody else wants, then I think the business will go in the right direction. Then again, that goes back to having some of the old-time bosses in there and kind of sticking to the old-time policy.

**Clark:** Is there any reason that you know of as to why you weren't on the recent pay-per-views before you departed the company?

**Scorpio:** I couldn't really understand it because I thought being how me and Marcus was the hottest tag team that they had going on, and it was just a matter if they wanted to push us or not, that we could have went in any direction. I thought that we should have been on some of the pay-per-views for the simple fact that they really didn't have so much of an eye-grabber that the people really were intense about really wanting to see. A lot of times the people love to see the great matches, but then again, they love to somebody that goes in there high-flying and doing a little something different. So in my opinion, I think we should have been on them and I don't know why we weren't. We never did hear anything through the grapevine and we didn't have any heat with anybody that I know of, so it's really hard to say. Then again, it just could have been the way that they had things going; so many new faces, so many new talents, so many new people trying to come in.

**Clark:** The unofficial response from WCW regarding your departure was that you failed several drug tests. Is that accurate?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, it is. The drug trest was strictly under marijuana usage. I never did hard drugs, nothing like that. But then again, that comes back to what you choose to do in your leisure time. Being how it is still an illegal drug, although it isn't as bad as some of the others, it's still an illegal drug. The policy was that it had to be under a certain level and on the third test it wasn't under, it was over by like seventy-two points or whatever. Any way you look at it, I failed it so I have to suffer the consequences. Right now I was in the process of maybe trying to go back in a year or so, so I still need to talk to them and see because when I left everything was still on good terms. It wasn't like there was a whole lot of dirt kicked up.

**Clark:** Do you think that you have selectively been picked out on this?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I do. Me and a couple of other guys that I choose to not use their names felt that we was more or less randomly picked on because of the simple fact that I think a lot of the guys are scared of somebody that has the ability and the talent to be a great star. And when somebody else doesn't really want you to be there, then they tend to pick on you a little bit. That's what me and a couple of the other guys kind of felt. But then again, it was just a matter if I felt like that, then I should have done something else. So I'm not going to really want to say a whole lot on that.

**Clark:** But it is a known fact that others in the company fail tests and get away with it without suspension or dismissal.

**Scorpio:** Right. There were several guys I know offhand that they signed and that they knew was on steroids and on whatever else, and they knew it and they still signed them. This is the thing that gets me. Not only that, I know that over more than seventy-five percent of the office smokes pot. So it's not like that's a really big issue. Even if you quit, marijuana does stay in your system up to four years, depending on how you consume it.

**Clark:** Isn't marijuana a pretty common drug in the sports world?

**Scorpio:** It is. If you had a choice of having your kid out there doing crack, drinking, or whatever, or smoking a joint, you would much rather have him smoking a joint. You ain't got to worry about anybody out there smoking dope and running over somebody. You ain't heard of anybody killing anybody. I've always been against any other types of drugs, but I never went to a drug seminar or I never gave a drug speech to any kids because with me still smoking pot I thought that just wasn't right. I was always for "no guns," "stop the violence," "do not do drugs," but I could never say anything about pot because I knew what I was doing on my own.

**Clark:** Do you think it's fair for a guy that is in the public eye and is a role model to kids to profess clean living and everything when they are not abiding by that in their own personal lives?

**Scorpio:** I think it's important to put the word out there, but I also believe in if you're not living by it yourself then you shouldn't go out there and preach that to somebody else. And nine out of ten times the guys that you've got up there doing it are usually on steroids or some kind of drug or some kind of amphetamine because that's just how the business runs. The thing that got me the most is, I can understand if it was coming down to a point where it was affecting my ability in the ring to perform or not keep up or put up, but it was never like that. It was always still there's so many guys there that they have that they're pushing and half the guys can't even lace your boots.

**Clark:** It seems you're in a situation where there's nothing you can really do about it unless you want to maybe burn a bridge or the like.

**Scorpio:** Right. And I'm not so much into burning bridges because other than that I felt they were messing with us a little bit more about the ones who smoked, but then again I know there's so many guys that smoke that's been there for so long and have tested positive for it and are still there. I just don't think that's fair, only because they're the top guys and that's who they want.

**Clark:** How would you describe WCW's dedication or lack of it to their drug testing policy regarding steroids?

**Scorpio:** The thing is, usually when a test comes out so many people know in advance that they have plenty of time to clear up before they even know about the test. Therefore, they're not going to hardly ever get a chance to really catch anybody. Then when you have somebody in the office who's forewarning the boys too, then it really doesn't help. Especially when I would like to see a few of the top guys maybe give up steroids a few times so they could see they ain't all what they think they are. Then I would feel a lot better about a few things. I do have that one thing against me, but I'm not on roids and I don't drink and I've always been able to hold myself in a respectable way wherever I go, whether it be Germany, Japan, or whatever. And I've always been more or less for WCW. Crowd drawer, crowd pleaser; if you really want to draw the money, do what you've got to do to do it. I'm saying don't be scared to do it. Me, myself, I felt that they were scared to do it. That's why I ended up being in a tag team because they never really had any plans for me as a single and didn't know what direction to send me or because I was moving up the ladder too fast.

**Clark:** What experience have you had with steroids?

**Scorpio:** None. Never tried them, never took them. I had a few guys offer, a few guys tell me to try it, a few guys tell me I could bulk up twenty or thirty pounds. But the thing is, I've always been a natural athlete. I believe in that prime time, good eating, mom's old-time good cooking, a little training, a little hard work. If you're going to get big naturally, then that's what you need to do, and not on gas, because it does have the side effects and I just choose not to deal with that.

**Clark:** Was there an atmosphere at WCW with a lot of the guys there being huge that steroids were acceptable or maybe even needed to survive in a good position with that company?

**Scorpio:** At one given point in time you used to see a lot of big guys around but now with the drug test you see a lot of guys coming and going, coming and going, you know, shrinking and coming back, shrinking and coming back. There never really was a whole lot of tests, but when all of a sudden everything went down with the WWF, everybody wants to be careful now. So I think they're getting a little bit more strict with it and I think if they do a few more pop quizzes, pop tests on people then they'll find a lot more dirt on folks.

**Clark:** With a guy like you who's kind of on the smaller side compared to some of the other big guys there, do you find it unfair that some of those guys are allowed to get away with doing steroids?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I think it's real unfair. Then again, like I said, they're strictly trying to go by policy which I can understand that too. But then again, you'd be amazed on how many times you can look past that policy if you really want somebody. So my choice is, did they really want me or was I just somebody else who was just there. Because they have so many guys coming and going, you never know, but I would like to know ahead of time and not be done out, say, behind the back or whatever, if that was the case.

**Clark:** How then were you informed that you were being dismissed?

**Scorpio:** As a matter of fact, I had heard through a grapevine from Marcus who said he had heard something from a couple boys that I was done. He asked if I took a drug test lately. I told him, "Yeah, they came back to me with a test last week." I went over to the Caribbean Islands and everybody was over there. When I got back, I was the only guy who went to the test from the Caribbean. First of all, I thought that was unfair because there were several guys I was there with who I partied with, so therefore I thought that I was snitched on.

**Clark:** So how did they actually tell you that you were being let go?

**Scorpio:** They didn't. I had to call the office and ask them what was going on. I said that I was trying to find out some test results. I called Gary Juster and he told me, "Didn't you get a certified letter in the mail?" I said, "No, I have not received nothing." And he said, "Well, yeah, you have been terminated. Your third test came back positive." And I said, "Well, I sure would have liked it if somebody had the courtesy to be man enough to call me and tell me that my test came back positive and that they let me go, instead of waiting for me to receive something in the mail." Because I still had an opportunity to get on the Japan junior tournament, which I've been on every year for the last two years, and I have never missed it. This year was the first year that New Japan did not book me on it because I had to give up my rights to New Japan to sign with them. I still could have gotten on the junior tournament, so I felt really bad about that because I could have gotten on that May tour. Then I ended up calling Bill Shaw in his office and I asked him what was going on and what was the deal. He said, "Yeah, everybody here in the office was real shocked, real surprised to hear. We really didn't want to let you go but we had to let you go because your third test came back positive." And I said, "I would have appreciated it if somebody would have called and told me." And he goes, "You were supposed to get a certified letter." I said that I had not received it and that it's been over a week since I did the test. He said, "Okay, well, we'll send something out to you the next day." Then I started talking to him, asking him about the contract. So that means everything is now void. I don't have any ties, no nothing, I can work for whoever. Because a lot of times when they fire you they have those clauses you can't work for thirty or sixty days. So I wanted to make sure that I was released and everything, so that's basically the reason I was calling and getting in touch with them. Other than that, they didn't even tell me. And then two or three days later I ended up getting a Federal Express package with a letter which wasn't even from a lawyer. It said that I was terminated due to a third drug test coming back positive. I mean I can understand if it came back positive for like cocaine, steroids, or anything like real sniff-ins. I told them, if you look at even the history of marijuana, it stays in your system. And if you've been smoking it as long as I have and of a high-grade, it's not going to be able to get out of your system in thirty days.

**Clark:** So these tests that you had to take were basically done on a random basis?

**Scorpio:** I failed one test and then I failed another one, and I went to a class for it. They made me and another guy go to class and pay two thousand dollars to go to a drug class. The drug class never pertained to weed, didn't even talk about weed. The class was basically on alcohol and sex addiction and everything else but marijuana. So we ended up paying two thousand dollars to go around and sit around for this which didn't do anything for us, and still ended up having to pay the office and stuff. Then after that they were still taking the money out of my check and still wanted to test me all the time for it. I'm like, "Come on, I'm paying you money and I went to the school. I'm doing everything I'm supposed to do, and I can wrestle with anybody, I can work with anybody you put me up against, and I sell and put them over, so it doesn't matter. The thing is, it's something that I do when I'm at home and I'm away from the business." I mean I could have put the test off, I could have went in and got a gimmick, I could have had my kids do it, but I'm straight, and I felt if I went in and did the things that I was doing, I was going to suffer the consequences. When I was talking to Bill, I asked him how long I needed to wait or what my chances were of coming back or what I needed to do. He goes, "There's always a possibility in maybe in six, seven months you could come back. Maybe you ought to wait a year or two before you decide to come back." I said, "A year or two, huh?" He said yeah. I said okay and left it at that. So I didn't really burn any bridges behind me and I didn't really say anything. I just left it alone. The last day I just went up and picked up my check, picked up my fan mail, and picked up up pictures, you know, because I answer my fan mail and do all that. So now I'm trying to get back with New Japan because that's who I was loyal to. I'm trying to find out what's going on with them and what they want to do now. I also wanted to work over in Germany for a change. I had an opportunity to go right out of Japan and right out of Mexico, but I was already gone from home for over a year and I didn't want to make that move right away. After a whole year, it's a long time to be away from home.

**Clark:** Working for WCW, how has the road schedule been? Has it gotten to a point where you're not working as much on the road?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, it's slowed down quite a bit. I mean there's sometimes where you might pick up and you might work quite a bit, but lately they've been trying to go back and basically do TV stuff and trying to get the people to come back and get them interested. They're not doing so many of the house shows. But other than that, I think it's been pretty good. It's in the right direction, the houses have been coming up. I thought that had a lot to do with us being a part of the team as well as part of a card, you know, me and Marcus. Now I feel that now that I'm gone that Marcus is going to either go down the drain or go down the tubes because he's not really all that great of a singles wrestler and I don't know how they're going to treat him now. So I'm more or less kind of worried what they're going to do with him. Me, myself, I can hold my own and just about go anywhere. So before I make the move up to WWF or anything like that, I'm going to kind of hold out and I'm going to go clean and quit smoking stuff because that's random testing up there on a regular basis. But I think I'm ready to try to see what the world has got out there in store. I think also if I was up in the WWF I think Vince would have done with me what WCW should have done with me a long time ago and I think it's just a matter of time. So I'm just going to play that by year and kind of see what happens.

**Clark:** How much did your financial situation change when you got the job with WCW?

**Scorpio:** It changed quite a bit because I wasn't really making a whole lot doing independents. I was making enough to get by. With five kids and stuff, it's kind of hard still even with the cost of living down here working for WCW. With what they were paying me, it still was hard. The thing is, like I told them, "You guys want a guy to get up and pack up his stuff and move to Atlanta and then you guys try a run and then be through with the guy." So even though all of this kind of seemed like it was happening now, I've already seen it coming. I just always said that I wished I had a little bit more time to prep myself and maybe not have signed that long of a contract to burn Japan or anybody like that.

**Clark:** When you went into WCW under Bill Watts, were you under a different type of contract than you were recently?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I was. I was on one of those three month deals but I also still had Japan and Mexico since I had gotten those by myself. I was still a self-contracter with Japan so anytime I went to Japan I dealt with Japan strictly through myself and not with the WCW company. A lot of times the company would tend to mess with them and stuff, so for a while there they were real leery about working with us.

**Clark:** Did you sign a new contract recently?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I did, shortly after November I did a new contract that was supposed to have been for two years for six figures.

**Clark:** What type of deal with WCW is there about what expenses you have to cover when you're on the road?

**Scorpio:** You've got to pay for your hotel, you've got to pay for your rent-a-car, and you've got to pay for your food. You've got to pay for your workouts at the gym. You've got to pay for just about everything. The only thing that they're paying for is the ticket that gets you to the town you've got to get to if you're flying. And if you've got to drive, you've got to drive your own car and they ain't even paying you anything. That's real hard on them. Before you used to get three guys to a car and you could get the car written off, but they don't even do that anymore. But now it's strictly a tax thing at the end of the year.

**Clark:** What policy do they have worked out now for injuries since Bill Watts left the company?

**Scorpio:** If you got injured and you got injured in the ring a lot of times they would pay for it for so many months if you went to their doctor or a workmen's comp type deal. Other than that, if you got hurt and you didn't go to the doctor right away and you waited and you went to your own doctor, they wouldn't even pay for it. And as far as having insurance, they really don't have insurance for you. There's no type of benefits whatsoever. The thing is, a lot of times I thought I should have got paid a lot more than what I was getting paid just for the simple fact that the stuff that I do is high-risk. And not only that, you guys want it and the people love to see it, and not everybody can do it.

**Clark:** Are you aware that a lot of the guys there have been taking pay cuts recently?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I heard that several people had to take a pay cut, but what I don't understand is how you make so many people take a pay cut and then you turn around and you bring in four or five or six people. Like bringing in the announcers and bringing in some of the top wrestlers. You try to pay them money to bring them back. You had the Big Bossman come back. You know, I know a lot of these guys are going to work but they ain't going to work for peanuts. I know a lot of guys took pay cuts but somebody like Vader or somebody like Flair, you can tell me what you want to tell me, but I know if he took any cutback, it wasn't much.

**Clark:** Would you say that with a family of five kids that you're struggling now or are you living comfortably?

**Scorpio:** I wouldn't say I'm really struggling but I would say I'm making it. But I'm on that verge of that it can go either way in a matter of a few months depending on what happens.

**Clark:** What misconceptions do you think people would have about the life of a pro wrestler and their financial situations?

**Scorpio:** People think that it's all the highlights and the glamour and stuff, but really, the life of wrestling is really rough and stuff. You know, living a life out of a suitcase. It's rough on a married man if you've got kids, a wife and a family. It's real hard on the family especially if you're away from home over a period of time. You're out in the limelight and you're always meeting up with young ladies, you know, rats of the ring, as we call them. There's all kinds of things out there that's real hard on a family. If you don't have a strong wife or a good relationship at home, it's real hard on a family. And then if you've got an office that's trying to keep you busy and wants you out there twenty-four/seven and not really paying you for it, a lot of that starts to wear on your mind too.

**Clark:** What has your attitude been towards the office?

**Scorpio:** A lot of times I've tried to put all that stuff behind me and just say I know what I've got that I can prove and I can go on to be better, it's just a matter if they want to pay me for it, and then again, I might trip and say, "Well, he's making more and he's making more, and you know he can't lace your boots." But again, I try to stick that in the back of me and just say, "Hey, hopefully on down the line they'll do right and if not somebody else will." So I think it's just a matter of time and I try not to burn any bridges and as long as I keep climbing the ladder and doing what I was doing, I think I'll be all right.

**Clark:** Especially with all the high-risk moves you execute in the ring, have you been hurt or suffered any injuries doing them?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I have. I've hurt my knee a couple times and I hurt my shoulders several times and I broke my wrist. But I hurt my knee bad enough that I could have been out. I shouldn't have been wrestling for at least a couple months, two or three months. I hyper-extended it and sprained it real bad one time and tore the ligaments. But I taped it up every night that I was hurt and went out and worked with a hurt leg every night of the tour where nobody else would. A lot of guys go out and say that they hurt a shoulder, hurt a back, pulled a bicep, and all of a sudden he can't work. This thing kind of bugs me a little bit, but then again, I guess that comes from the different styles of training and that comes from the respect from over in Japan. The style over there is that you work or you go home. I'm kind of like, "If you want to eat, you work. If you don't want to eat, what do you do?" So I've gotten used to doing it in Mexico and Japan where I've been hurt several times with the knee, but I still tape it up and I have enough moves and aerial tactic maneuvers that I can go out and get it done even with the one leg or whatever. As a matter of fact, the last junior tournament over in Japan I hurt my leg the first night over there. They asked if I wanted to go home but I ended up finishing off the tour anyway. So just stuff like that to me is like having more respect for the sport. That's kind of like the old-time stuff where guys go out hurt with the broken noses and the messed up arms and still go out and do what they had to do because the people paid their money to see them.

**Clark:** Looking back on it in the situation you're in now, it is really worth it to you to go out and do the high-risk moves and even go out and work injured if you're not really protected by the company?

**Scorpio:** To me it's really worth it because if the people paid their money and they go home and they're saying ooh and aah and they remember a move that I did, and saying, "Man, that was too cold, you had to see that," then I know I've done my job right. If you get some little kid come up to you and say, "Oh, you're my favorite wrestler. I want your autograph," then you've done something right. If you can make that kid get up and make Mom or Dad go buy one of your articles or something that you've got up there on sale, one of your merchandise, then you're doing real well. It all has it's good points and it's bad points. Sometimes it has it's disadvantages because you do say, "Hey, man, I'm doing this. Do they even respect this?" A little thank you, a little incentive like a little extra pay doesn't hurt. A lot of times you'd be amazed on what a little thank you or a pat on the back can do for a lot of the wrestlers, which some of the top guys in the office really don't do. The thing that I really appreciate the most was Greg Gagne, Bobby Heenan, Harley Race, and a few of the guys that have been around for a while that see something that you did in the ring and come back and give you that information and that experience that you need that you can learn from That is really good.

**Clark:** But do you think that the management should take more responsibility and take a more hands-on approach in that manner when it comes to communicating the good points and bad points with its talent instead of it just being a thing the fellow employees do?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I really do. But then again, I think that Eric Bischoff or whoever's up there in the office knowing this is going on and that this is for their TV, then I still think that it doesn't hurt for some of those guys' faces to be seen with the wrestlers because it does do something for the people. Is this guy a suit that just sits up behind the office or is this someone who cares about what's going on in the business that comes down where the wrestlers are and mingles and acts like a human being, a person, instead of just acting like an office person or suit.

**Clark:** How would you describe your experiences working with Jushin Liger, The Lightning Kid, and Chris Benoit?

**Scorpio:** I think that's been my biggest experience, working with Chris Benoit and Jushin "Thunder" Liger because they were some of the top guys and when I first went to Japan Benoit was one of the guys that really helped me out and taught me the shoot style wrestling. That got me really used to that style of wrestling over in Japan. So Chris is really one of my big helps. Jushin "Thunder" Liger has a lot of moves and I really liked working with him because I was just impressed with somebody else that can do all the stuff that I can do. Then the people even put me right up there in the top category with him, even considering me as one of the great wrestlers with Muta and Chris Benoit. I mean the people who haven't really been around the world and haven't really seen a lot of wrestling really don't know. But I really appreciate those guys a whole lot. Lightning Kid, he was young and the first time I saw him was last year in the junior tournament. I talked to him and we had a real good time and I enjoyed working with him. I thought that his style needed a little bit more work on it but I thought overall if he kept doing that style and the more that he kept working the better he would get. I mean the more he works with Liger, Chris Benoit, me, Dave Finlay, or any other guys like Eddie Guerrero in the junior tournament that it would really improve his style. But then again, he was in the same situation where I was where you might have had only one or two guys who worked over in Japan or Mexico who knew that style if wrestling that he was doing up there. When somebody else doesn't really know that style of wrestling it's really hard for somebody to keep up with you.

**Clark:** Out of all the guys you have worked matches with in WCW, who were you most comfortable with and most enjoyed working with?

**Scorpio:** I really liked working with Chris Benoit when he was down there. That was my favorite because we know how to work together and we could really do a Japanese style match that he could understand. Also I liked working with Steve Austin, he was a real good worker. I didn't like working so much with Flyin Brian. I wasn't too crazy about his style. He was always considered one of the great high-flyers but I just never really respected him I guess because he really didn't respect me. I guess it was one of those things, a conflict with another high-flyer coming in. You know how that is.

**Clark:** What do you mean when you say that he didn't respect you?

**Scorpio:** I didn't think he respected me when I first came in. He hardly did talk to me the first couple months when I got there. He wouldn't even talk to me. He was the only guy that they saw could come off the ropes or do any high-flying maneuvers and his maneuvers at that time were good, but some of the maneuvers he does is just like everyday high spots in Japan and Mexico, which was good here because the people here haven't seen that style. It just took us a while before we really got warmed up to each other and starting kind of talking, although we were both faces at the time. I liked working with Orndorff and Roma. I enjoyed working with the Barbarian when he was in. With a lot of big guys it's a different style of wrestling where I had a lot of different chances to do different maneuvers. When you're working with the Barbarian, that's a whole totally different style. A lot of people say, "God, what is he going to do now?" So you've kind of got them on the edge of their seats kind of wondering what you're going to do. So there was quite a bit of guys in there that I really enjoyed working with. And Sasaki, I liked working with the Japanese guy when he came only for the simple fact that I trained in the dojo with him and he was one of my teachers as well.

**Clark:** Were there certain guys in WCW that you would work a stiffer style with?

**Scorpio:** There were a few guys where I would tighten up. Dallas Page was one. He had a rough style of wrestling which I love so I would always tighten up and bring it a little bit harder to him because I always felt that he could handle it. Any of the bigger guys that I fought I would always bring it to them a little bit harder because I just said, "Hey, take it or leave it. You're three hundred and some odd pounds, so I don't want to hear anything."

**Clark:** Speaking of working that tighter and stiffer style, what kind of an experience was it wrestling Vader?

**Scorpio:** I worked a couple times with Vader and that was an experience in itself, but it was fun and stuff. Vader's the type of guy that will knock your block off but when it's time for you to deliver something, he's right there to take everything that you can dish out. Then again, like I said, he got me into it and got in a fight with one of my kids and stuff. Like when we got in the ring and he told me, "You know we're going to have to fight one of these days. This is the way I feed my family, it ain't nothing against you, but this is what I do for a living. And when I get in the ring I'm going to have to kick your butt." I just told him, "If you think you're going to kick my butt in the ring, you've got another thing coming. I guess we're really going to be kicking each others butt."

**Clark:** Is there anybody that you worked with at WCW who wasn't into working that more agressive style and liked the laid-back style more?

**Scorpio:** A lot of the older guys like Paul Orndorff worked more of that older style, more of a grab-a-hold type style. I loved working with Barry Windham. I pretty much worked my style but he's one of them old great wrestlers who's done a lot of the different styles of wrestling. He does basically an American style wrestling, grab-a-hold and brawl. So that was a little bit different working with him but I think most of all I really enjoyed working with him because that was a learning experience in itself.

**Clark:** Would you say there was maybe different levels of motivation in yourself when you were working with different guys in the company?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, there would be. I mean when I work with more of a top guy, then I would be more willing to work with them than with a guy that I never worked with. I felt that I could just pretty much go out and just dominate and do what I wanted to do to him because I was just so used to the style that I was coming from. Still with me trying to switch to the American style and still doing Mexican and Japanese at the same time, I had to convert all that into the American style.

**Clark:** What style are you most fond of or most enjoy working?

**Scorpio:** Actually I kind of like mixing it up now. I kind of got used to it. I really like the Japan style wrestling more because of everything else in it and the people just seem to understand it a lot more. I also love the Mexican style type wrestling because it is the high spots and the flips and the different aerial type tactics that I can do. And you'd be amazed with some of the fat little chubby Mexicans guys that can get out there and do that. Just to see somebody do that just kind of amazes me and I'm just glad that I can kind of keep up with them.

**Clark:** Was the tag team situation with Marcus Bagwell something you thought could have gone further or were you more interested in working as a single?

**Scorpio:** In that situation I could have went either way. I felt I could have pursued a lot more and a lot faster as a singles because I wouldn't have to do anything, meaning I wouldn't have to worry about a tag team partner or nothing like that. I would just have to learn to work by myself, which is a lot more easier. But then again, at the same time, I thought that the tag team was headed in the right direction and we were moving up. I thought me and Marcus had great potential of holding the belts and keeping them for a while. If they wanted to take the time to do what they had to do with us I think we would have been on the right track. And if I had a chance to go back and do it over I wouldn't mind hooking up with Marcus and do it again because the people were behind us. That was the main thing. People liked us and people were behind us. It took them a while to get used to Marcus and me being a tag team but when they finally got used to it, for some reason we just clicked. I mean, the pretty boy and the high-flyer, and then we kind of took to each other too. We weren't really spending a whole lot of time as far as on the road but when it came down to the gym and when it came down to talking and when it came down to us getting in the ring, we just seemed to happen to know what each other was going to do. And that's a real tag team partner. So if I had to come back and do a tag team again, if it couldn't be Chris Benoit, then I guess it would have to be Marcus Bagwell.

**Clark:** How did you feel about coming into WCW and replacing Robby Walker while they...

**Scorpio:** Actually I kind of felt bad for him because I didn't realize that when I came in that they had kicked him to the curb just like that and had finished him off in the next TV. They took the guy out and then right away I was Ron Simmons' partner. The thing is, as I was looking at it also, I knew I was a better wrestler and I can say that it looked like a better team. But I didn't think that was right with the way that they did him. I thought there was a lot better ways they could have did that. I also felt that maybe it could have started a little heat down there, and then again with my style of wrestling, it kind of had a lot of guys puzzled on what was going on and what's going to happen now.

**Clark:** Was it ever an issue for you portraying or not portraying a stereotypical black with the Too Cold Scorpio character?

**Scorpio:** No, because actually, usually when I'm in there with the Too Cold gimmick I've always been Too Cold and I've always danced. Outside the ring that's me too. I love to dance, I love to have a good time, and I love to laugh. When it comes down to kicking butt, you just kick butt. I think that's kind of just stuck with me. So as far as having any kind of pressures, no, it was nothing like that.

**Clark:** Why do you think there are a lack of black wrestlers in talent positions in the wrestling business?

**Scorpio:** Because there's a lot of guys that are still in the office that's kind of stuck in the old school who really deep down inside are prejudice who believe in that this is the only sport that white men still take over. Realistically, if you really look at it, how come this is the only sport that black persons don't take over? Then again, that just comes from who's in the driver's seat and the way the thing has been driven. And it's been like that for a long period of time. But I think also it's time for them to let go of that and just kind of let things be. If they think that somebody has that natural talent to be a champion or whatever, they should do it and not hold them back for other reasons, because he is black or whatever.

**Clark:** Do you feel in any way that was ever the case in your situation?

**Scorpio:** I think lately it was something like that. I think it could have been more of that. See, I don't know if it was because I was black or because they didn't want to do it or I don't know if it was because they didn't think that Marcus was championship material, but I just didn't think that I was being treated fairly sometimes when it came down to that. There was a lot of times that a few other guys had chances to get the belts and I should have been in there.

**Clark:** Considering the lack of black wrestlers in the business, do you in a sense feel lucky to have been able to make it where you have?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, I have. But then again, I never had a doubt in my mind that I wouldn't. I've always thought that I would make it. And I'd rather be in the WCW because that's where I've always wanted to be. But then again, I'm also a businessman and you've got to go where the business is, and if it's up there in the WWF or Germany or Japan, then that's where I would go. And as long as I could still make the people go ooh and aah, then I know I'm doing my job right.

**Clark:** Has your year and a half tenure at WCW altered your attitude towards the wrestling business?

**Scorpio:** No, I can't really say it has. It kind of made me real leery and kind of opened my eyes up to a lot of the bullshit that's going on out there. I mean it really smartens you up to a lot of things that's happening out in the world itself. So it really was a good learning experience in itself to take elsewhere. Learning from my mistakes is the one thing I can do.

**Clark:** When you talk about the crap that's going on in there and maybe the lack of communication from the management, did you ever have problems like that in Japan or Mexico when you worked there?

**Scorpio:** No, none. And to go to Mexico and not speak the language and be down there for four months and never have a problem is great. To go to Japan and work there for eight months and live there where nobody speaks English, it would seem like you would run into more complications with trying to do spots and attitudes and ego trips, but it really wasn't like that. The people were very respectable towards me. It was a real good learning experience.

**Clark:** So that crap in wrestling basically only exists in America?

**Scorpio:** Yeah, it does. And the thing is, you've got so many guys down there with ego trips and you've got a lot of guys with a lack of communication. If a guy would communicate a little bit and some of the top guys who have been in the business for so long, even some of those guys, if they would just shut up and listen to some of the young guys sometimes, you know, even they would be amazed on how a match would come off sometimes. So it has a lot to do with that and a guy being like, "Well, I've been in the business ten years, I've been in the business twenty-five years, I know what I'm doing." "Okay, twenty-five years ago, that was fine. This is 1994. *This* is what they want to see now." And then again, if you voice your opinion and they feel that you're going against them, somebody goes to the office, and the next thing you know, there's the bullshit. So your best bet to do is to try to keep away, which I did, as I didn't really ride with anybody. I stayed in my hotel by myself. I get along with everybody, but don't really hang out with anybody. And when I do get high or whatever I do is pretty much by myself. Because the simple fact is, when you do it with other people, people tend to snitch. People want to do this because that's what they're paid to do.

**Clark:** What kind of an impact do you think your experience at WCW has had on your overall career in the business?

**Scorpio:** I think it's had a very good impact. It made me want to work a lot more harder to prove to these guys that I am the championship material that I should have been. And if they want to take me back and make me a champion, they can. And if they don't, then I'm not going to sweat it because I'm going to go on to bigger and better things where I have to go. It's just like the old saying goes, you go from A to Z and back again. A lot of guys that have been here now have been around the world and back again. Flair has been around the world twice and back. I'm ready for him to disappear off the earth now.

**Clark:** But as far as exposure for yourself, you've been on TV a lot and people in the States have now been able to see you for the first time.

**Scorpio:** Yeah, that's really helped a lot. The biggest thing is that I hear a lot more fans and a lot more people talking about how they appreciated and how they loved seeing me wrestle and how they weren't watching wrestling anymore and then they started watching wrestling again when they saw me wrestle. You know, that's a good feeling in itself. So just with that alone is enough to keep me going because I know that the people want to see me whether it be in the WCW or the WWF. The people want to know what's going on with Too Cold so I'm going to try to keep that in mind and keep that going for them as well.

**Clark:** Well, you came into WCW and you probably had one of the more exciting debuts, but where...

**Scorpio:** Really, and I thought that was really good. I was real nervous and the ring was a little bit smaller so I had to get used to working the smaller ring like overnight. It was different but the overall crowd response that I got from "the diss that don't miss" itself was incredible.

**Clark:** But where do you think they could have taken you from there?

**Scorpio:** I think right now today there ain't no way that I shouldn't have been the U.S. TV heavyweight champion. I now should be maybe running an angle with Steve Regal or I think I should have been a U.S. champion before Dustin (Rhodes) was a champion. But then again, that comes back from his daddy being in the office, if you ask me. But the thing about Dustin is he's a good kid and he works really hard and if it wasn't from his daddy I think he'd be a hell of a lot more wrestler and people would respect him a lot more. That goes back to the old Erik Watts. Daddy came in and put him on top. But the thing about Erik Watts is that they tried to discourage him and they tried to make him quit, but he's still there fighting and going on strong. They're trying to keep him on ice but he's still fighting. And I love to see anybody that's doing that, that has that much strength and energy to keep going for the sport itself regardless of what they keep doing to you.

**Clark:** What kind of interaction did you have with the WWF during your WCW employment and do you think there's a possibility of you going there now?

**Scorpio:** The only thing I had was basically Big Van Vader keeping in touch and talking with somebody up there. There was some talk then that me and Vader might be going up there. Now there might be some talk that Scorp' might be going up there. It's just if somebody wants to pay you right and everything is going good, then you've got to do what you've got to do.

**Clark:** Would you look forward to going up to the WWF?

**Scorpio:** Actually I would if he's going to do the right thing with me. I really would. But for right now I'm kind of set and I'm kind of stuck with just Japan and right now would rather prefer to be in WCW. But I'm not going to sweat that because I'm a businessman. If the proposition comes up and I have an opportunity to work so many days a year and make so much money or I have an opportunity to work somewhere and I know it's guaranteed, then I've got to go for what's guaranteed.

**Clark:** In the 80s everybody in the business wanted and strived to go to the WWF. Do you think that attitude has changed now?

**Scorpio:** I think that everybody kind of wants to be down there in WCW just for the simple fact that they don't know what's going to happen up there in the WWF. But in all honesty I think with (Jim) Cornette being around and he's been around for a long time, and Jerry Jarrett, between those two families alone who've been around the business just as long as the WCW or anybody else who has ran it at one given point in time, I think they could pick it up off the ground and do the right thing with it; you know, give the people what they want to see and bring back the old style of wrestling. But the thing is, I like the WCW because it's still kind of like under the wrestling than more or less under the entertainment. That's why I kind of like Japan and Germany, because it's still the wrestling and not really so much of the entertainment.

**Clark:** Could you tell me what you saw during that incident with Arn Anderson and Sid Vicious in England?

**Scorpio:** They were in the hallway of the hotel when I saw it happen. Sid was stabbing, punching, kicking, and all kinds of shit. I tried to get in between them. Then Sid took off and headed for the lobby area, and he was covered in blood. Leon was standing there and he tried to hold back Sid, before he ran out of the hotel. All's I know is that they were fighting and Sid was on top of Arn, he was obviously winning the fight. I don't know exactly what happened before I got there, but the chair was destroyed and was laying all over the floor. I think Arn had the scissors, but I'm not that sure, and then of course Sid got a hold of them. You wouldn't believe how much blood was all over that hallway. They were fighting all over from one end of the hallway to the other end of that hallway. It's amazing how Arn was able to survive that, you know, with how big Sid is.

**Clark:** What plans are you making for your future; whether it's Japan, Mexico, WWF, or independents?

**Scorpio:** Right now I'm working on Japan, Mexico, and Germany. I want to try to work between those three in the next year. I'm looking forward to working independents too because a lot of people that go to the independent shows have seen me on TV as well. So I'm just basically going to put myself out there all over the world. I'm going to be here today and going to be there tomorrow. So I'm planning on being on the scene for a while.

**Clark:** What do you hope to accomplish in your pro wrestling career?

**Scorpio:** I hope to accomplish a title around my waist and maybe a short-term or a long-term contract with Japan or Germany over a period of time where I could work between both of them and still have enough time to come home. A lot of times I can work so many weeks in Japan and still be home more in Atlanta than I can if I'm working with WCW and still make the same amount of money. So right now my goal is to shoot for more money, less weeks and still do what I'm doing.

**Clark:** What do you think you would be doing if you weren't in the wrestling business?

**Scorpio:** If I wasn't doing this right now I probably would have been training to go out for professional football, being how the free agent gimmick had come back there for a while. I probably would have had to go out for football because I've always loved the sport. Then again, I'm a handy man so I probably would have been playing Mr. Mom and cooking or painting or running some kind of shop some place. You know as they say, doing that nine to five everyday job.

**Clark:** What other things are an invaluable part of your life right now?

**Scorpio:** The things that are most important to me in my life right now is basically my family and my kids. My kids mean a whole lot to me. The other thing that's real important right now is that I feel that I have this thing to do for wrestling as far as bringing a new flavor to it and bringing it to the 90s and getting people used to this style. It's time for some of the older guys like Ric Flair to get out and let some of the younger guys do their thing. They might be surprised at what us young guys can do for wrestling. But I want to get people used to this style, so it's like "I'm On a Mission" (IOM). So one of the most important things in my life right now is completing that mission like I should complete it. Everybody says that heroes die but legends live forever. I want to be one of the legends in wrestling.

# DAVE MELTZER

The following interview with Dave Meltzer, 33, editor and publisher of the twelve-page weekly Wrestling Observer Newsletter, the number one and most widely distributed inside trade publication on the professional wrestling business, was conducted via telephone from his apartment in Campbell, CA on July 6, 1994. The address for the Observer (if you're one of the few people left who don't already know it or who haven't committed to memory) is P.O. Box 1228, Campbell, CA 95009. The new rates are $8 for 4 issues up through $70 for 40 issues.

**John Clark:** What kind of a background do you hold in journalism?

**Dave Meltzer:** I started doing a wrestling newsletter in 1971 and I did that through 1975. Then I wrote for the school newspaper in college and I wrote for several different newspapers actually while I was doing the Observer, and then eventually the Observer got successful enough to where I was no longer writing for any newspapers.

**Clark:** When was that point where you were able to just do the Observer on its own?

**Meltzer:** 1986, 1987, that's about the period. At that point I was doing a full-time job and then I did the *Who's Who* book, and doing the Observer all at the same time. I was just driving myself totally insane so I knew I had to drop some stuff and pretty much just to restore my sanity I had to pick either the Observer or staying with the newspaper. I just enjoyed the Observer so much more so it was like a no-brain decision.

**Clark:** Could you trace back your earliest interests in pro wrestling and the different stages that interest grew through?

**Meltzer:** I started watching it in '70, '71. All the kids in the area were watching it and I just watched it along with everyone else. I always had the writing and I was always doing writing anyway. I wrote about baseball and football and things like that. So naturally, watching so much wrestling, I started writing about that too. But I've probably been interested in wrestling since that point. I'd say I followed it really close through the 70s and kind of lost interest in the 70s. In 1979 when Georgia Championship Wrestling hit the cable out here, I think that that's when my interest started coming back. And from about '81, '82 when I started doing the Observer, I started getting really interested in it once again.

**Clark:** What were some of the different things that your interest in wrestling took you do, such as tape trading or other things that involve the wrestling business?

**Meltzer:** In the 70s nobody tape traded, nobody had VCRs. But I think tape trading was probably what got the Wrestling Observer going because I was one of the earliest people tape trading. I think I probably started doing that around '81 and at that point there were all the different territories and there were very few people that were seeing all those different territories. I wasn't seeing all of them, but I was seeing a lot of them, and I saw Japan earlier than most people did. There were a few people who had gotten Japan tapes before I did, but again, not that many. Everyone knew from different newsletters that were around then who won and who lost, but nobody really knew like who was good and who wasn't good because you know who wins and who loses and who's on top does not necessarily reflect of anything other than like who's friends with what promoter or who owns a piece of the office or who's son or whatever, so I started writing about, "Well, this guy may be winning but he's not really a very good worker or this guy's got charisma but his wrestling isn't that good." I started writing about things like that. I was writing to different people and then eventually I just started doing the Observer because it was just easier than writing a whole bunch of different letters. Japan really opened a lot of it up because most people hadn't seen it and Japan at that point was years ahead of us, like it usually is when it came to a lot of aspects of wrestling, especially with the light-heavyweights and stuff like the original Tiger Mask and Dynamite Kid and people like that. We had nothing of that caliber in this country and we really didn't have a lot of wrestling, we had some, but we didn't have a lot of wrestling like the caliber of Bruiser Brody, the Funk brothers, and stuff like that. I mean we had some of it, but we didn't have a lot of it then either.

**Clark:** What was it about wrestling that attracted you to it and held your interest to it?

**Meltzer:** I'm not really sure. At the beginning I think it was like everyone else, I think that I kind of got into the interviews and then I just got really interested in it. I mean I was interested in all sports. I was interested like that in basketball and baseball too, as far as who was good in clutch situations and things like that. So I mean my interest in wrestling at that level was no different than pretty much everything else at the time. When I was a kid, the things people were interested in was the NBA, the roller derby, professional wrestling, baseball, and football. So I mean that was it and all the kids knew all about all of them. So I had to know as much as everyone else, if not more because I was just naturally competitive in that way.

**Clark:** What caused you or what led you to have the desire to publish a newsletter on the pro wrestling business with an honest approach?

**Meltzer:** I tried to do it when I was like eleven, twelve years old. Even then, if I look back at some of the stuff I did, I don't think that I ever tried to pretend that wrestling was real. I mean it wasn't like the Observer or anything. But I guess the real answer to that is that when I was in college in about '81 most of the guys in my class, not all of them but seven or eight of them that did the school newspaper--I was the sports editor of the school newspaper (San Jose State)--were all big wrestling fans, but they were all closet wrestling fans. I mean they would never go to the matches but they knew who all the guys were on Atlanta and they knew who all the guys were on AWA TV. None of them for a second believed it was real or anything like that. That wasn't even an issue. They were just entertained by it just like I us and we all talked about stuff and they were really, really interested in whatever inside stuff I had, which wasn't that much then, but it was more than they had. And I realized there's a tremendous audience out there that likes pro wrestling, but I mean they're not going to read wrestling magazines because that stuff doesn't give any of the information these people want and I just knew that there was an audience out there that wanted this kind of information, and there was nothing being done, so I just figured that it was a good niche. Plus, the people I was writing to, that's the stuff they wanted anyway. So I mean it was just sort of a natural just based on my background and what was going on at the time that it naturally fell together. It wasn't like I set out with a marketing plan, it was just sort of like that people were always asking me this type of information and I had access through different sources and different people who I knew to get some of it and then I started the newsletter, and then once you start doing something different, there's going to be some people who are with you and some people who are against you, and the people who were with me helped me out a whole lot.

**Clark:** So was your motivation in putting out the Observer to educate the people reading it?

**Meltzer:** No, my motivation was just because I felt that there would be a lot of people interested in it and it was to educate myself on wrestling too. You know, I wanted to learn more myself. I don't really know that I actually had so much of a motivation as much as that when I was a kid I did a newsletter and, "Now I'm interested in wrestling again, so why don't I do a newsletter again." And then it kind of fell in from there. I mean I knew what I wouldn't do. I wasn't going to do a newsletter and pretend it's something that it's not because I was letting my friends at school read it and I didn't want them laughing at me or going, "Oh my God, you're taking this too seriously." So I think that's part of the approach.

**Clark:** How would you describe the process through which you became smart to the wrestling business?

**Meltzer:** I think that's a weird thing because it depends on what you mean by smart to the business. I mean there's always things to learn. But as far as the process as far as knowing that it was predetermined, I mean when I was eleven years old, in fact younger than that, I think I started going to wrestling when I was nine or ten, all the kids knew that winners and losers were predetermined. I mean it was just known and everyone in fourth and fifth grade knew that. It was never a secret or anything, it was just something that we all knew. I mean we would go to the matches and we would know that and we would suspend disbelief and we would have a great time. I never considered it an issue. And I remember when I was about twelve years old, this one guy who hung around the wrestlers would just go, "This is like the big secret. I'm going to smarten you up." And he starts telling me these things, and I go, "Oh, I knew all that." And he's like, "No, no, no one knows this. No one knows this. If a wrestler found out that I was telling you this, they would kill me. I'm breaking this code." And it's like, "Oh, God, get real." You've got to remember this is like '71, '72.

**Clark:** Were there any guidelines or rules that you set for yourself on doing the newsletter or any kind of a philosophy you might have developed for doing it?

**Meltzer:** I don't think I had any real guidelines. I think it was just to be honest with yourself, that was about the only thing I could really think of. I mean once the Observer got going, especially when you get to know people, I felt that there was a dividing line between business and personal.

**Clark:** What boundaries did you set for yourself on what was to be printed when it came to that dividing line between business and personal situations?

**Meltzer:** If something happened in someone's personal life that was of absolutely no relevance to the wrestling industry, I didn't see a reason and I never felt that that should be printed. I'm sure someone could go back and come up with points where I violated that, but I had that opinion all along. It's like, what someone does in their personal life is their personal life, but if it causes them to miss a match or if it causes something to do with the business, if it has an effect on their business performance, then because this is a performance business where you perform for the public, the public has a right to know if there's a reason that you're not at a hundred percent. So that's what I think. The public or the consumers, since they're paying for your entertainment skills, whatever they have a right to know that would affect your performance, I think is fair game. If it has nothing to do with your performance, then to me, it's like personal life but nothing to do with your performance, then that's personal life and I don't see any reason to cover that because then it's nobody's business. But if at any time it affects the wrestling product or is a reason that a guy no-shows a match or a guy loses his job, then to me that crosses the line because then it affects the business aspect of wrestling and then it's no longer your personal life. Then it's part of the entertainment world.

**Clark:** How difficult was it for you to get contacts for your newsletter considering how the business was never covered on an honest level before?

**Meltzer:** I think looking back that I was real, real lucky. At the beginning it was just something that, because there was nobody else doing it, for the first couple of years people were so encouraging. I mean everyone that I came in contact with was just so encouraging. I mean there were a lot of people who I'm sure wouldn't talk to me, but the fact is that I never talked to them anyway. I mean I didn't know who they were and I didn't talk to them. I knew that there were those people, but since I didn't deal with them it was never really a problem. The people who I did deal with were always really nice to me. There was stuff I didn't know but I tried to learn it and there's still a lot of stuff I don't know now. But once you stop learning, then you're dead anyway in wrestling, to me. I mean there were people who were geniuses in this business a few years ago and the minute they stopped learning, two years later they're obsolete, they're on the scrap heap. So as soon as you have this thing, "Oh, I know the wrestling business," a year from that point you're going to be so out of touch that it's not even worth it. I think that that's something that I learned in the last couple of years because I've seen that happen to too many people who in the early 80s when I would talk with them would be almost like mentors and I would learn so much from them, and then years later they're still back in the early 80s and they're not changing with the times, and I realized that it was actually very sad for me to see some of that happen.

**Clark:** Regarding the kind of a reaction you received from those in the business, was it really mostly positive?

**Meltzer:** Most of the people who I actually dealt with were really encouraging to me. As time went by obviously I got tons of negative reaction, but by the time I was starting to get negative reaction I was expecting it anyway just by the nature of what I was doing. I figured that if I'm doing my job right I'm going to get a ton of negative reaction and then when I got negative reaction, I took it in a positive way because it was like, "Well, that's what I'm expected to get because obviously people in wrestling aren't going to like something of this nature. So therefore, if they're mad at me, that means that I'm doing my job really good." Actually, in most cases that was the correct way to look at it. Occasionally, I probably was wrong in looking at it that way, but most of the time I think that was a pretty fair assessment.

**Clark:** Was there ever a time in your life that you wanted to be a professional wrestler or a promoter or hold any other position in the business?

**Meltzer:** Definitely never a wrestler. I don't think that at any time in the last ten, twelve years I ever wanted to be a promoter. I've never really seriously considered working in the wrestling business. I mean I've probably entertained the thought years ago, but not for very long. But I knew the minute I did that that would be it for the newsletter and I thought of all the things I could do in wrestling, and there would be nothing that I would enjoy as much as the newsletter. Thoughts cross through your mind, but as far as a serious thought that I'd ever want to do anything like be a wrestler or a promoter or a booker, no. Never, never.

**Clark:** Would working in the wrestling business ever be an option for you in the future?

**Meltzer:** It would be very difficult for me to do that. Truthfully, I think that as far as the creative aspect a couple of years ago I really felt that I could have done really well because my mind was more geared in that direction. I don't know that I would do as good a job now as I would have then. But at that point where I really had a lot of confidence in how creative I was, even then I never actually wanted to do it. I just had a lot of confidence that I could do it, in fact I was like certain that I could do it if given the chance. Now, I have some confidence but not as much as I would have then because I think when it came to angles and things like that I was a lot more creative a few years ago because that's just where my mind was. But I thought I could do it, but as far as actually wanting to do it, I always strongly didn't want to do it because I knew the inherent problems in doing it from so many directions. Especially if I would be the one doing it, it would just be too hard. I mean even if your ideas were good people would shoot them down and you'd get in that little thing where people don't want to do it exactly as you want it. And so then you're compromising with everything, you know, the real job of a booker, all the compromising and stuff, and the promoter having to deal with all the different problems from all the guys and all that. That stuff never sounded appetizing. When I actually knew what everyone did in wrestling, I mean none of the positions sounded very enthralling to me at all.

**Clark:** As far as the future, if there were ever a situation where somebody were to offer you a job in a creative position in wrestling, do you think that you would seriously think about the offer or would it be something that's totally out of question?

**Meltzer:** It would depend on the offer. I really don't expect it to ever happen. I don't think that I would do it but I don't want to say for sure because, who knows? I mean in a different stage of my life there may come a time in five years where I'm going to say, "Hey, I've done everything I want to do with the newsletter and I need a new challenge in life." I mean, I don't know. Who knows? Maybe at that point I would love to do it. I don't know that anyone would ever ask, but I would never say never. I wouldn't quite close the door. I would strongly, strongly think that it would never happen and that I would never want to do it, but I wouldn't say that absolutely.

**Clark:** How was the star system for rating matches that is seen in the Observer today derived?

**Meltzer:** That's pretty funny. Norm Dooley did a newsletter before I ever did the Observer, although I actually did newsletters before Norm Dooley also. He used to do a newsletter that was really, really funny and it was kind of like, a lot of what I did with the Observer was patterned after Norm Dooley because Norm Dooley did a newsletter and he didn't make any bones about what was going on in wrestling as far as all that. I don't think what he did was nearly as widely read as what I did so people thought of me as some pioneer doing this stuff, but I mean he did it before I ever did. I probably started getting his newsletter just as I started the Observer or I may have gotten his newsletter just before starting the Observer. I don't really know the time frame, but he was doing it first, but I don't remember when I first started seeing his *Weasels World* newsletter. I mean he used to go the matches every Tuesday night at the Louisville Gardens and he would travel all over the country and he did a lot of traveling in those days to different arenas for big shows; he went to Greensboro sometimes, St. Louis sometimes, Memphis sometimes. He would rate the matches with stars, which he got from Jim Cornette, who actually as far as I can tell invented the system. So it was somewhat like an accepted thing with the newsletters. I mean it had been done before and I just naturally did it, just copying him more than anything else.

**Clark:** What exactly is the criteria for the star system that you judge the matches on?

**Meltzer:** There's no such thing as a criteria. I mean you can look at it and try to be uniform or consistent, but it's also impossible to do it. You just do your best. I think the people who have watched long enough kind of have an idea of what a three star match is as compared to a four as compared to a five. To me it's just like, if a match stinks, I mean just bad, it's like a dud. And if it's really just beyond bad, then it's like negative stars. One star is for a match where they do a few things but it's not a good match at all. Two is your normal everyday variety match. Three is a good match. Four is a great match. With anything above a four, it's just that they're blowing you away. That's probably the easiest way to explain it.

**Clark:** Could you go through what your average week in putting together the Observer looks like?

**Meltzer:** I mean it's just talking on the phone and gathering information. Monday is devoted mainly to writing. Tuesday is writing, Wednesday is mailing, and then the rest of the week is just gathering information. Some weeks I'll take more than others. If there's a big story, I could work from when I wake up to when I go to sleep for a full week with just meal breaks. I've done that more times than I can even remember. Whenever there's a big story, that's what I do. If it's a slow news week, then I don't work nearly as many hours. The Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday is pretty consistent every week and the rest of the week just depends on outside forces. I'm not in as much control of my own destiny as the wrestling business is in control of my destiny.

**Clark:** How have you seen your subscription rate since the Observer's inception increase or decrease over the years?

**Meltzer:** Well, it's always increased except for in '92 when the whole business hit the skids, at that point there was no increase. But then it eventually started increasing again. It's continued to increase but it hasn't increased as much in the last year or two as it did in years prior. But it's continually increased. There's never been a period where it really went down or anything.

**Clark:** Were there certain periods where you saw it growing much more rapidly than other times, and what would you attribute it to?

**Meltzer:** Oh yeah, there's peaks. I'm not sure what I attribute them to. It was always going up by a lot from the mid 80s through like '92. Most of the time it was going up pretty quick. After '92 it stopped going up, except it started trickling just because I think that the interest in the business just wasn't like it was before and the curiosity wasn't like it was before. If you look at how the magazines did and everything like that, I held up better than most of them. So I think I've got a more loyal audience and I think that the concept of what I'm trying to do, which is entertaining but also talk about what's going on in the business, I think conceptually that concept holds up better in the bad times for wrestling than other things. I will say that I am absolutely amazed that someone has not tried to do what I do in a wrestling magazine form. I'm completely amazed because in 1986 and 1987, I mean I just thought that was a natural and it was like a year or two away from happening. And then here we are in 1994 and I don't even see it in sight. Why, whomever it would be, why that boat was missed, I'll never understand. That boat was totally missed.

**Clark:** That was one of the questions I had, and regarding that, have you ever thought about doing a newsstand magazine ala the Observer?

**Meltzer:** It's been suggested to me by a couple of people, but usually what would end up happening is that I actually love doing the Observer, I feel so fortunate that I've been able to do it and I just don't want to do anything else. Like, I mean they had to drag me kicking and screaming just to do that 900 number, which has all been like a 99 percent positive experience. And they had to drag me kicking and screaming into doing it because it's almost like I love doing the Observer and it's almost like I just don't want to do anything else having to do with wrestling. I just want to do the Observer and watch my videos. That's almost like what I want out of this. And I just didn't want the extra work involved and I just didn't want to be the guy who did it on a newsstand because I just didn't want to compromise the Observer. So I never really wanted to be the person who did it, but I'm amazed that no one else did. To this day I'm just surprised. I'm just shocked, really. In fact, I'm more shocked almost than when it didn't happen in the late 80s because it would have been a natural.

**Clark:** What kind of an impact do you think that would have on the business and those working in it and do you think the reaction from those in the business would be a negative one?

**Meltzer:** The reaction would be negative. But if it happened today it wouldn't be that bad because everyone reads the *Torch* and everyone reads the Observer. I think that people would not like it but I think enough people would cooperate and I think it would have no problems. In the mid 80s it would have had a lot of political headaches, and it still would now, but the political headaches would be easily overcome today, whereas before it would have taken some time smoothing them over, but they would have been overcome then too.

**Clark:** How would you react to the theory some people in wrestling hold that a publication like the Observer where the business is exposed does nothing but hurt the industry?

**Meltzer:** Does the daily newspaper kill basketball and football. I mean, what's the difference? There is no difference. They want to live in this world that doesn't exist anymore. Does *Variety* kill the movie business? Does the concert newsletter that gives all the grosses and gives all the back page stuff, I forget what it's called, but there's a big one that everyone reads in that industry, I mean did that kill the concert industry? No, the concert industry is up. When there are a lot of touring acts that people want to see, the concert industry has banner years. And the years when for whatever reason there aren't as many touring acts, all of a sudden it's a bad year for concerts. And the fact that information is out has no bearing on it whatsoever. It's already out there in every other form of entertainment and it doesn't have an effect. Wrestling people are just looking for excuses because sometimes they're kind of caught in the dark ages and they have to modernize, and rather than modernizing, they want to just blame things that have changed. And one of the things that have changed is that there's always going to be publications of this type around. I mean that's just a given now and that's the system, and you have to accept that. And if you don't want to accept that, fine, you can be behind the times, but it's still not going to change it.

**Clark:** What is your current subscription base and are you content with where the Observer is now?

**Meltzer:** It hovers around the 5,800 mark. As far as content, yeah. I don't really worry about subscriptions that much because I really only worry about doing the Observer. Subscriptions aren't a stressful thing. Obviously, more subscriptions would be nice and I've been caught behind the times myself in that I'm not advertising as much as I should. So I've been way, way too lucky in that this business was built mainly through word of mouth, and word of mouth can get you just so far, but it's actually amazing how far it's gotten in this case. But I've got to in a lot of ways keep up with the times too and I should be doing more advertising, and I've neglected that. So hopefully I'll do that. To me it's like, all I really want to do is the Observer. I don't even want to market it and I don't want to think that I'm in a marketing business. I mean I look at the bottom line and all that, but I don't really look at it as like, "How do I extend my business," and things like that. I really never think about it. I just want to do a good issue. This is my mindset. I'm of the opinion that if I do good issues, then the business will maintain itself and stay successful. But in reality in the business world that isn't the case. You always have to, not necessarily upgrade, but you have to always strive for new readership and a new audience or else your audience will stagnate. And I have neglected doing that. But hopefully I'll get up to speed on that. I guess there's some modernization that I probably need to do. If I could figure out a way to bypass the U.S. Postal system, I mean that's like the next step. I've actually been thinking a lot about ways to do that because I think that's a frustration for everyone who gets the newsletter and it's a frustration doubly for me in that I just work like crazy to get that thing mailed every Wednesday so people can get it by Saturday all over the United States. I mean out of the United States, that's going to go whenever it is and no one can get upset about that. I mean to me, everyone in the United States should get it on Saturday, and I know that on the east coast people get it on Monday, they get it on Tuesday, and it's ridiculous and it just drives me crazy. And what can I do? I mean there's nothing I can do about it, but it just shouldn't be that way.

**Clark:** Since salaries of those working in the wrestling business are fair game in your publication, would you disclose what kind of living you're making doing the Observer?

**Meltzer:** If I knew exactly, I would tell you. But I consider it a good living. I know it's over $100,000. I know it's well under $200,000. So I would say that $150,000 isn't far off, but I couldn't give you an exact number because I honestly don't know.

**Clark:** Looking back when you started this thing as a kid basically, are you surprised as to where it has taken you as far as financially and as a career?

**Meltzer:** Yeah, I am and I'm not. There's a guy named Bill James who had all those baseball books out. I think *Baseball Abstract* was his first big book. So he came before I did. He had an idea for a book that was just going into these baseball statistics like a lunatic, and every publisher said, "There's no audience for this. There's no audience for this." And he just kept getting the door shut and the door shut. And you know, years later he had one best seller after another after another after another. And now, time passed him by and everything like that. I mean it happened with him and he had his run and then it was over. But he had best sellers for year after year with this idea that people from the outside that weren't baseball fans and didn't understand that there's a whole bunch of hardcore baseball fans who just lived and died with this kind of information when it came out, and there was a huge audience enough that he had best selling books. He made a ton of money doing that. When I first started it, here's the way I looked at it. Here I am on this newspaper staff and there were twenty-five, thirty people on this staff. And like six of them loved the Observer, they were wrestling fans and they loved how I did the Observer. Do you realize the number of people worldwide, who if they were exposed to it, would love the Observer? I mean the number is millions, not hundreds of thousands, it's millions. And obviously because I never marketed the thing, and it's difficult to market something like that, I knew I would never have millions, but to say that I never thought that it would grow this big, in a way I thought it never would and that it just wasn't going to happen, but then other times I'd go, "You know, the potential is there for it to have a million readers." So I can't say that I'm surprised one way or the other. I can't say I expected it, but I'm not surprised.

**Clark:** What have been the biggest stories in pro wrestling from your own personal perspective that you've covered doing the newsletter?

**Meltzer:** The Brody thing was the hardest for me to do. The biggest stories; the whole Von Erich family thing because it was a thing that pretty much went nine years, between the first death and the last. I covered them before when they were all alive and kicking, and they were a big story then too. So it was over ten years of covering them. That was really sad when you saw it happening in front of your eyes. That was really terrible. I've gained more mainstream notoriety and more mainstream media visibility through the steroid thing than any other. I'm in a lot of ways as tired of that story as anyone and tired of being linked with that story, but at the same time, it's such an important story. I'd really not be doing my job if I didn't keep up on it now. Now it's bigger than ever before. So I was really interested in that and that was probably the biggest one in a lot of ways. The Vince McMahon expansion was a huge, huge story. A lot of things that happened in Japan; like when Riki Choshu jumped promotions. At the time those were huge stories. The Brody death was real big though. That one I'll always remember. That one effected me stronger certainly more than any of the others.

**Clark:** Because of the personal nature of it?

**Meltzer:** I don't know. It was just something unique. I mean I had never done murder stories before, especially with someone so big in the industry. The Von Erichs and Gino Hernandez and people like that had died, and there were drug overdoses and there were suicides and things like that, but there was something about Brody, like he was kind of like a hero to a lot of people who I knew. He was a different breed from everybody else and the idea of him dying... It's so callous to say that certain deaths you almost expected, but it's true. But that was just so unexpected and it just like knocked me out. There have been certain things that have affected me very deeply personally that I've covered, and that probably more than any other. I went through a major period of depression after that.

**Clark:** What story to you has been the most important and maybe one that you've taken a lot of pride in for reporting on?

**Meltzer:** I take pride definitely in the coverage of steroids because I had to do a ton of research because I knew going in that I was going to be lied to, and I was from all points, and I had to know what was going to happen. From looking at a reporter's standpoint, I think that I probably did my best job as an all-around reporter on that story than any other. It definitely comes most to mind also because it lasted so long and it's never gone away. The story has never gone away. In another sense, the business has certainly over the last two or three years changed greatly when it comes to steroids. I mean the attitude has changed to a point. It's been forced on, but it's changed. There's still steroids, but it's not like it was in 1989. I remember going to some WWF and WCW matches after the Zahorian trial and it was so embetted in the business. I just go, "You know, no matter what Vince McMahon says, no matter what Kip Frey says when he came around, or anyone else who had told me point blank, 'We are going to rid steroids from our organization,' which they both did, I would look at these guys and I would say, 'This is so embetted in these organizations, it just isn't going to change.'" And the fact is that it has, it has changed.

**Clark:** Could you explain your experience with body building and weight lifting and any experience you've had with steroids?

**Meltzer:** I've never taken steroids. I wouldn't classify myself as a body builder, but I've weight trained since I was in high school. I guess I'd have to call myself at one point a body builder because when I was in college I competed in body building contests. But after the age of nineteen, I never competed in another body building contest and I never got the inclination to do so. Part of it was because the means necessary to become competitive in that were means that I was just totally unwilling to even consider doing. So that was that, but I've weight trained on and off my whole life. I mean I don't consistently do it. Right now I haven't seriously lifted weights since I think August of last year. It's not something that I always do, but it's a hobby and I do it on and off.

**Clark:** For those in the business who were obviously taking steroids throughout the 80s and the early 90s when it was really big and a huge part of the business, do you ever look back and try to put yourself in the position of a wrestler to see how difficult it might have been to be around the business at that time with the presence of steroids and the lure that there obviously must have been, and thought about what you might have done in that situation?

**Meltzer:** Oh, absolutely. If I was in the wrestling business at that point, I find it hard to believe that I wouldn't have taken steroids. I mean I never wanted to be a wrestler, but the point is, if I was a wrestler at that time in the mid 80s, I would have to think that I would have (taken steroids). And that's one of the reasons why I said that. Because here I am, I'm not against steroids at all, okay, I'm against lying. And there's a big difference and I think most people don't understand that. I mean if people want to be honest with it and they can hold up to the scrutiny... If Hulk Hogan were to have gone on Arsenio Hall and said the truth, I mean the real truth, "I use steroids. I used steroids for like fifteen years. I probably wouldn't have been able to be in wrestling without steroids. I'd be fifty pounds lighter without steroids," or whatever it is. And the truth is, and people said, "Okay, he wouldn't have been Hulk Hogan without steroids. He is Hulk Hogan. Now should he be selling vitamins, now should he be doing this?" And let the public decide with the truth out there, then I would say to let him take the steroids as long as the truth's out there. Now that it's illegal, that adds another implication, but to me, if you're going to tell the truth about it, which most don't and that's my problem with this whole steroid issue, is the consistent lying about the issue, not the use of the steroids themselves. But I've never had any inclination to do steroids, but if I was in the wrestling business, if I was a professional wrestler in the 1980s and I had to compete for jobs against guys who look like that, and being a competitive person, which I am, I mean there's no question that I would have taken them. I've got to believe I would have taken steroids. Maybe I would have just quit the business, and maybe that's one of the reasons why I never had an inclination to be in the business. But as someone, if someone was breaking in, I mean what do you tell them? Everyone's on steroids that's making money, virtually. Obviously there are exceptions, but virtually almost all of them were. What do you tell someone? And this happened to me countless times and it just happened to me like a week ago. But in the 80s this happened all the time. Now it happens a whole lot less. A young guy calls you up who's a pretty decent worker on the independent level, and just goes, "I want to make some money in wrestling. Which is going to be better for me? To go out in the gym all day and train to be a wrestler and learn to be a great worker or to go out and take steroids?" And in the 80s, you know what the answer was. What am I going to do? Am I going to lie? I'm not going to lie and say, "I wish you wouldn't do it, I wish you wouldn't sacrifice your health, but I know you're going to do it anyway." And I think that's one of the reasons why I had the problem with the people running the profession because they tried to say it's the person's choice. It wasn't the person's choice, the system forced them into it. A lot of the guys would have taken steroids anyway, true, but there's a lot of people in wrestling who when left to their own decision-making process would not have taken steroids, except for the fact that they felt that it would have been advantageous for their job. And as soon as that's the case, then it's the environment and that's the people responsible for that environment that are ultimately to blame for what was happening.

**Clark:** How have you seen changes in the way in which pro wrestling was generally viewed by the mainstream media and society through your years doing the Observer?

**Meltzer:** In the very beginning they had an interesting relationship. There would be sports stories done on them from time to time, but not too much. And then in the mid 80s it was sort of like everybody wanted to do their little wrestling story. Now it's to this point where like no sports section hardly is going to cover professional wrestling. You know they always used to have the results in the newspapers and things like that and then in the 80s when it got more outlandish and even as it's popularity in some circles grew, newspapers just weren't going to cover it because it was like, "This is too outlandish." Yeah, it's changed. But now you don't really see a whole lot of articles on wrestling in the newspaper. You see a few. You see it on the tabloid TV shows because wrestling is really visual and some of the guys are really well known and wrestling always has scandal because the nature of the people in the business is that they can't tell the truth and they keep getting caught in their lies and that creates another scandal every time. I shouldn't say the whole business can't tell the truth, just there's certain individuals. It's very unfair to categorize the business like that because there's honest people in wrestling too, but the nature of the business does bring out the dishonesty in a lot of people.

**Clark:** Since you started doing the Observer at a young age, did you feel there was a lot more respect for pro wrestling back then as far as its coverage in the media and the way society or anybody in your environment at school viewed it?

**Meltzer:** You know, of people that I know, I would say that there was more respect for pro wrestling before. Just the type of reaction I got from just friends and stuff. I mean, now, the truth is that most of my friends are not wrestling fans and I don't really sense that they have respect for pro wrestling, whereas when I was in college most of the people who I dealt with respected it. The ones who weren't wrestling fans hated it even then, no doubt. But I would just bump into more people who had some respect for it. I think that there was more respect for it then than now. I don't have a scientific way of saying that, but just the people who I bump into, I sense people had more respect for it before. I think that it was really cool for a period there in the mid to late 80s, but then when that wore out it seemed like for some reason a lot of people didn't respect it.

**Clark:** Has there been any times when you've been doing the Observer where you kind of felt ashamed in any way for taking the stance on covering something in a truly honest and respectable way that a lot of people now look at as laughable?

**Meltzer:** I've had frustration in that, which I've totally had to come to deal with, no matter how good I get at what I do in my own circle, I realized that I would never be somewhat accepted with the sports writers. I mean there are some sports writers who are very complimentary to what I do and some have written me really nice letters and things like that. Like Frank DeFord, since I met him when I was doing the *National*, he has always been so very encouraging of me. And that's really good because you've got the guy who's considered the best sports writer in the country and he respects me as like one of his peers and always has said that on TV shows and radio appearances and things like that. So that's good, but at the same time, I'm over this completely now, but definitely when the *National* folded, I had periods where it was like no matter how good a job I did, I realized that I would never be accepted or I would never be given credit if I actually did do something really, really good. Like I don't think the weekly Observer as far as quality writing is particularly great, I think it's what it's going to be when I'm trying to single-handedly turn out ten pages of material on all kinds of news, by myself pretty much. I mean it is what it is. But there are two or three issues a year where I'll sit down, and there's a story, and I go, "I've got a story to write and I'm going to write a quality story." And I think that there's times when those times come up that my work is really good but it will never be accepted as far as, because I'm doing wrestling. If I tell people that I'm a really good reporter or I'm a really good sports writer, there will be a few people who will accept that and most people will like laugh behind my back about it. It's like, "Oh, he does the Wrestling Observer. (sarcastically)" I'm over that now, but after the deal with the *National*, what frustrated me about that was, all along for years I always thought if I ever had a mainstream vehicle, which the *National* turned out to be, that I would do really well and it would get over huge. I knew it would. I mean there was never any question in my mind and when the *National* came, I didn't want to do that either! They had to drag me kicking and screaming to that one too. I didn't want to do it because I just didn't want to add to responsibilities and take the time, but it would have been a foolish move not to do it and I realized that, so I did it. And there were a lot of things about that period doing the *National* that I didn't particularly like, but overall they got more response to the wrestling column than anything else they did. I mean Frank DeFord said that on ESPN and on sports talk shows when they would ask who was the most popular reporter there. I mean he would never say, "Dave Meltzer's the most popular reporter," he would almost do it as like, "Well, we actually get more response to the wrestling column than anything else." So it was in there and it was successful, yet no matter how good it was, you'll have Howard Cosell in his book say, "Oh my God, look at that garbage, the wrestling column in the *National*." I mean he didn't know anything about wrestling, but it was like, "Here I am with some garbage writer," even though they haven't actually read what I wrote. It was a damn good wrestling column given its limitations. It could have been better, but given what it was, it wasn't bad. It was like no matter how good it was, you know, people are just going to say, "Well, it must be garbage because look at the subject." And it was by no means garbage.

**Clark:** A lot of people now talk about where they see the pro wrestling business going in the future and whether it's going to be able to survive. Where do you see the coverage of pro wrestling going in the future? Do you think there will ever be a point again where it could receive some respectable coverage?

**Meltzer:** It's got to clean up its house. And it will because it's just going to have to. I mean either that or it will probably, I won't say it won't survive, I don't want to be that drastic because I do believe wrestling will survive somehow, some way forever or for the foreseeable future, but it does have to clean up its own house. And when it does, I'm really hopeful that it can get respectable coverage. But wrestling's got the same problem in that even if it does something really good, like really creative stuff and really good execution and great athletes, there's still going to be people that are just going to dismiss it because it's professional wrestling. Here I am complaining about the *National,* but the guy who in a lot of ways I always felt sorry for in some ways is Flair. I'm not saying the Ric Flair of today, but for his whole twenty year career Ric Flair may have been and I think he probably was the greatest wrestler of all time. I mean, performer, you throw the whole thing into it, every aspect of being a professional wrestler; he's the best all-around for longevity, for what he did in the ring, for his interviews, for everything. Not for drawing power, but he was a good draw too, but just for all that he was the best there ever was, yet, within in the profession, yeah, people respected him, but among the general public, it's like when Ric Flair walks around, there's always going to be people who are nice to him, but how many people are actually going to realize just how good he really is? I mean, as good as he was, it's very few. I think that's kind of sad, that as good as he was, to the general public it's like he could be no better than any other wrestler because, "Well, aren't they all fake anyway?" Not just Flair, there's all kinds of guys in there. There are guys that are real credits to this business that work really hard under really bad circumstances and have done it for years and between the aches and the pains and having to put up with management that's doing wrong by them, and then really go out and give you a great show all the time. I kind of feel sad that a lot of them don't get the respect they deserve. Some of them made a lot of money, and Flair's lucky in one way, because Flair really has made a lot of money. And there are guys that are maybe not quite as good as him, but there have been some really great guys who never made anywhere near the money Flair did, and have a lot of ability too. So I guess it's just like any other entertainment entity, but in other entertainment entitys the difference is that if you're a great actor there's going to be a lot of people who are going to respect you for it. If you're a great baseball player there's going to be a lot of people who respect for it. If you're a great wrestler, you're going to have some people who respect you for it and then the general public's just going to go, "Ahh, he's a wrestler," derisively.

**Clark:** But do you think that perception of pro wrestling will ever be able to change or do you think wrestling will always now be looked at in this way?

**Meltzer:** It's going to be hard to change it. I mean the perception is really strong. I'd like to say that if they clean it up and do this and this that it could be like Japan where you have a guy like Baba who's so well respected. But there's been a lot of stuff it's gone through and it's going to take a long, long time and it's going to be hard. In Japan they got all that coverage that makes them respectable, in a sense, because they get all that coverage and they're in the newspapers. How do you get this stuff back in the newspapers? Well, first of all, you have to get it real popular. But even then, that's no guarantee. There's attitudes that you have to build up on why things are covered and why things aren't covered in newspapers and the media. And right now the fact is, in the media wrestling isn't covered because it's wrestling. You can make the argument now that it's not that popular, but there are periods when it's going to get popular again. But it's like, you don't cover pro wrestling in the sports section because it's not really a sport. You don't cover it in the entertainment section because it's a sport, even though it isn't. So for it to get that respectability, I don't know how it can get it. I used to think it could, but now I don't know if it ever will.

**Clark:** Do you see any correlation in the history of how wrestling and boxing have been covered in the media and the different images they have had?

**Meltzer:** Boxing doesn't have the kind of the depth of a fan base that wrestling has because wrestling can manipulate its stars and everything like that, whereas boxing manipulates them to a point, but they're not as charismatic usually as the wrestlers. So you can get one or two or three boxers in every era. Right now it's like Julio Caesar Chavez and a few years ago it was Mike Tyson, who are going to be super, super draws, bigger than any wrestler could be. Boxing's always going to get major coverage for whoever is the hot person at the time when he has his "big fight." And wrestling will never be able to do that, but on a club level, on a small level, in a lot of ways wrestling's much healthier.

**Clark:** Do you think that coverage of boxing will become more negative like the coverage of wrestling maybe because of an image change boxing could go through?

**Meltzer:** A lot of boxing is negative. It just depends on what breaks and things like that. I really don't know enough to answer that. Don King adds a lot to a negative perception. I think most people have a pretty negative image of it because they see Don King and they think he controls everything and that somehow he makes all the money and the fighters are all swindled. There's probably a lot of thruth to that too. So people have a negative image of boxing, but the thing with boxing is that there is that intrigue. And wrestling can do that too. If wrestling is presenting something that people want to see, all the scandal in the world won't affect it, but when it's presenting something marginal, that's when all these little things don't help. If there's something where it's hot as hell and there's a match that people want to see or some guys with so much charisma and they present it correctly, it can overcome a lot. Wrestling's fighting a lot of things. It's got a lot of obstacles; overexposure for a long time and the cyclical nature where it's kind of like a bad cyclical time and it has to be reborn. There's going to be a new technology with this information superhighway with five hundred stations and all that, and that's going to affect wrestling. I don't know if that's going to be good or bad for wrestling, but it's going to affect it. Every new technology effects wrestling. Cable instigated a lot of things that have happened in wrestling. Almost everything can be directly attributed to sixty percent of the homes getting cable. It changed the whole nature of the industry. Television obviously changed wrestling tremendously. In the 40s it made these showmanship telegenic personalities into the big drawing cards rather than the guys who just won their matches. This is off the subject, but wrestling was worked back then, but Strangler Lewis was a great shooter and he got the title and he had the political power in the 20s. Strangler Lewis' argument was, when people would say he was a boring performer and it was in the newspaper the next day, they don't look at it as was it a boring match or not, they just see Ed Lewis beat whomever, and that's all that counted and that's all that was in the newspaper. When it got to TV all of a sudden winning a match wasn't the be all and end all, you had to have a telegenic personality. And then, of course, it evolves and evolves constantly.

**Clark:** Have you seen your enthusiasm level for pro wrestling change much over the years doing the Observer?

**Meltzer:** It always goes up and down, but overall I think my enthusiasm level towards wrestling has always remained pretty high. I don't think it's ever gone down too much. I always have enjoyed wrestling. I don't think I've ever reached a burnout stage for more than a day or two. I cannot remember doing an Observer and saying that day, "I wish I didn't have to do the Observer." I mean when Monday comes, it's like I'm ready to write and I don't want anything to get in my way. No, I don't get burned out doing this. I think other people could. I think most people would, but I don't know what it is, it's just something about writing and wrestling. I mean those are like the two things that I really love doing; watching wrestling and just being a student of wrestling, and I love to write. So, no, I never get tired of that. I'm real lucky in a lot of ways.

**Clark:** Have you ever been faced with any verbal harassment or any physical provocation from anyone in the business based on something that you've written or maybe just from the honest reporting in general that makes up the Observer that some people in wrestling might be offended by?

**Meltzer:** Well, verbal reaction all the time. Physical reaction, no. But I think that's more due to that I'm not the type of person who hangs out in bars with wrestlers. I think if I did, maybe there were periods I would have gotten in a lot more trouble. But I just really don't enjoy doing that. I've gotten tons and tons over the years of negative verbal reaction, and some of it's deserved and in my opinion some of it isn't deserved. You have to take each case individually. But without a doubt from other people's point of view some of it is deserved. And I've made tons and tons and tons of mistakes over the years. It's just the nature of the beast, unfortunately. I wish I never did, but I also accept the fact that in doing a publication like this, anyone who thinks in this business or any business, even covering baseball or something else, if they think any newspaper is going to be a hundred percent accurate, it just can't happen no matter how well intentioned the person is. Just for all the wrestling fans, whenever there's a story on wrestling in their newspaper, they look at it and go, "Oh, my God, this is wrong and this is wrong and this is wrong." And the truth is, if you're a baseball fan or a politics fan or whatever, it's not going to be as much as wrestling, actually there's more ignorant writing about wrestling in newspapers than about politics or baseball because they're more trained in it, but you'll still find it. That's the nature of what sports writing is. It's like, there are sports writers I see in all the papers and you read their opinions, and you go, "My God, they don't even think this thing through. Their logic is ridiculous and they don't even understand their own subject." I think that all the time when I read different reporters. And other reporters seem to have a better grasp of things, but even then, there's always going to be things you disagree with and there's going to be mistakes. There's well intentioned sources that get wrong information. So I've been yelled at, and at times deserved and I think often times not deserved too.

**Clark:** Have you been faced with any lawsuits or any legal action against you in your time doing the Observer because of anything that you've written and published?

**Meltzer:** No, never any lawasuits, but I've had several threatening letters. I would say never even close to a lawsuit. It never really got that far. I really haven't even gotten threatening letters from very many different people, although I've gotten a lot of legal letters from the same people over and over again.

**Clark:** Does that surprise you considering the nature of what you're reporting on?

**Meltzer:** No, because the truth is that I know what libel law is. First of all, it's almost impossible to libel a public figure, and most of these wrestlers in a sense are public figures, and are definitely public figures to the audience that reads the Wrestling Observer. So it would be very difficult to libel them. But if the court were to rule that it was a minor wrestler and I said something that was bad and it hurt them, you'd have to prove first of all that what I wrote was false and you'd have to prove that it was damaging to the wrestler's career. The other thing is that you have to prove that I had knowledge that it was false when I wrote it. The key part of that is that I've never written anything that I had knowledge was false at the time I wrote it, and I think everyone knows that. I mean I've never even been threatened with a libel suit, I've just had nasty letters. I truthfully don't believe that I'll even ever be threatened with a libel suit because I would have to write something that I knew when I was writing it was false, and hopefully I will never be stupid enough to do something like that.

**Clark:** There are many newsletters on pro wrestling out there that have obviously spawned from the Wrestling Observer, but which ones do you feel are deserved of your respect?

**Meltzer:** One thing we were talking about was where newsletters are going. I think that if you just look at entertainment and what people want, which is what type of shows are gaining in popularity, I mean people want dirt, there's no doubt about it. I get letters and they want personal gossip about these people, and I do think that there's going to be popularity in that. Now to me, it's like, I cover the business of professional wrestling. And certain personalities are so big in the business that their personal lives probably become more public than others. For example, we all know Hulk Hogan lied about steroids on Arsenio Hall. It's been said a jillion times. Now how many wrestlers do we know that have lied somewhere or other about steroids? I mean, I won't say all of them, because there's many who have told the truth. But there's many, many, many, but yet Hulk Hogan will always be remembered for it because he's the larger than life figure. Believe me, I hope no one ever gets thing wrong. I have dealt with far, far more dishonest wrestling promoters than Vince McMahon, but Vince McMahon is the king, he is going to get the most coverage. People want gossip about anyone and everyone. And sometimes, like who Missy's dating, just as an example, I really don't like reporting on that because I just don't know what that has to do with anything.

**Clark:** But getting back to the question, what newsletters do you think have won your respect?

**Meltzer:** I'm real critical of newsletters but I enjoy newsletters probably more than almost anyone also. I don't think I even want to judge a newsletter as a whole, I'd rather judge on individual things. There are times where I'm probably as critical of the *Torch* as like almost anyone just because I know most of the personalities involved. Yet at the same time I'm like a super, super, big fan of the *Torch*. I mean that's my favorite newsletter without a doubt. But there are times when I read the *Torch* where I just think, "Oh, God (confused)," I mean sometimes I just look at some of the things in there, and I'm just going, "Oh, God (confused)." And other times I mean I just look at it, and I go, "Man, I really wish I could have wrote that," or, "Man, someone really wrote a heck of an article. They really thought this point through and they made me think about something that I hadn't thought about." So my favorite is the *Torch*, no doubt about it, but there are times when I see something in the *Torch* that I don't like and sometimes I don't agree with it, but I guess overall that one I really like. I don't think any of the others are of that caliber. I don't think there's anything else of that caliber out there right now. I mean I like your thing because it offers something different and because the information is usually a lot more accurate than most. That's one of the things, like a lot of newsletters that will just print any rumor. It's like, some that are just like so ridiculous that how could anyone even think for a second it could be true. I'm hard-pressed, yet any newsletter I get I read. I like most of the people who do them. Most of the people who do newsletters who I deal with, I like them individually. But as far as rating them, I don't know. It's like, I'll read a *Chairshots* and I'll read one column and I'll just think, "Boy, this is garbage," and I'll read another column and I'll go, "I think that's pretty good." I can't say, do I like *Chairshots* or not? I mean I like some things and I don't like some things. I always read them from cover to cover, so I guess that means I like them. But yet there are things in there that I would vehemently disagree with and things in there that I even think are garbage and that are petty.

**Clark:** From looking at the other newsletters, have you ever thought about improving or changing your layout or changing your style in which you do the Observer?

**Meltzer:** There's something about the Observer, and hopefully the writing will stay good enough that I don't turn into Verne Gagne, but I really don't want to change the layout. I don't know, there's something about it. I have a feeling, and maybe this is behind the times, but that there's a certain charm to the Observer in that it's got everything wrong with it that anyone could say--there is no such thing as layout, there are no headlines, there's nothing breaking it up, it's just ten pages crammed with information--yet it's successful. I'm almost proud of that. It's like, say all those things are wrong, but the fact is that I do a good job and that's why people are going to read the thing. I almost like the idea that it's just crammed with information. I just cram as much information in there. Whatever I do as far as making the layout nice would take away space for writing, and I just want to have as much information in there as I can and whatever space I have left over I want to have as many letters in there as I can. I'm already frustrated in that there's not as much space for letters nowadays because so much is going on than as before. I personally think that the layout is way behind the times, but I almost think that that's kind of like it's little weird niche in that the Observer has to be ugly to be good. It's like a meat and potatoes type thing. Me, from a personal standpoint, I wish that I could do an Observer every two or three weeks and work on my writing and be the writer that I think I have the potential of being, but the Observer doesn't allow that. But that's cool too. I think it's almost cool that there's so much information. I learn every week on wrestling and hopefully other people can learn too from watching wrestling. It isn't the greatest writing in the world, but it gets its message across anyway.

**Clark:** Speaking of the *Torch*, what kind of a relationship do you have with Wade Keller and how often do you communicate with him?

**Meltzer:** It depends. I really don't know what kind of a relationship I have. I respect him greatly. There are times that we talk fairly often and there are times that we go long periods of time without talking. There are people who I talk with in wrestling like several times a week. I think that we have an open communication. When something major happens, often we may talk regularly. But he's not one of the people who I talk to very often, and it's not because of any heat between us, it's just that he wants to do his thing and I think that's just about it.

**Clark:** Do you find yourselves helping each other with stories and working together on news or do you consider the *Torch* and Wade Keller strictly competition?

**Meltzer:** I don't consider the *Torch* competition. I don't consider anything competition. If there was a situation that was going on that he had more knowledge on than me, I wouldn't hesitate for a second to go to him to find out what he knew about it. It works both ways. But ninety-five to ninety-seven percent of what goes in one or the other's newsletter probably has nothing to do with the other person. I mean he has his sources and I have mine and he has his opinions and I have mine. During this trial that's going on right now, we've talked a little bit more because of the trial than we've talked in a long time. It's not like we talk on a regular basis, but we don't talk on an irregular basis either. I talk to you a lot more than I talk to him, just as an example.

**Clark:** Wade Keller's *Torch* not only features news, but also includes opinionated columnists and interviews with those in the business. Why is it you seem to have stayed away from doing interviews and using columnists?

**Meltzer:** One is, I don't have space for interviews, and two,--I don't have a problem with interviews per se --but I have a problem with a lot of wrestling interviews. It just depends on what it is and who it is. If it was like a real major story and an interview was welded into the major story, I would do an interview. I think the last one I probably did was Billy Graham, a couple years ago, which I thought was one of the better issues ever of the Observer. But just an interview for the sake of an interview, I don't have the space for it and I've seen a lot of people do interviews who I think are working to either get a job or who knows what. A lot of the interviews look really transparent and I just don't really want to waste my space with it. Some of the interviews are really good, but most of the people who I talk with who I think would be great interviews, if I interviewed them I think that they would be less honest once it came out in that situation. So it's like, then why do it? I would love to use columnists if I had the space and if it was the right people. Right now I'm expanding to twelve pages and I expect that they're going to be jammed. With ten pages I don't have enough room for the news and the results as it is because I want to include letters, which I don't have space for. I think that if I was covering two promotions, then I would have to have columnists because there wouldn't be enough news. But when you're covering the world every week, there's a hell of a lot of news. Even if there's not news here, there's always news somewhere.

**Clark:** Do you consider the work of those doing the wrestling magazines that of a journalistic nature?

**Meltzer:** No, I don't, but they're all different. I don't like people grouping newsletters together. I really have a pet peeve with someone who uses the term "sheets." The term sheets for me, I think that is a personal insult--not that I consider the word sheets as negative--but because of the idea that people would group all of these newsletters together. I don't want to be grouped in with anybody else and I know Wade Keller doesn't want to be grouped in with anybody else. We all do our own work. I don't think that you want to be held accountable for someone who doesn't have clue one about wrestling who's writing a newsletter. I only want to be held accountable for what I write. It would be like holding every wrestling promoter accountable for one really scummy one. There's plenty of scummy ones, but just to say, "All those wrestling promoters are all scum," I think that's an unfair statement because there's some of them that are really nice guys and there's some that are more honest than others. I hate grouping like that, so every wrestling magazine should be judged on its own. I think some of them are more journalistic than others, but I wouldn't consider any of them as journalism.

**Clark:** How powerful do you think the Observer is in the wrestling industry, especially when looking at its possible influence on decision-making by the wrestling companies and its possible influence on the actions of the workers?

**Meltzer:** I don't really think it's that powerful. The Observer can be a positive and it can be a negative. It can be and should be very much a positive in a way where you take a guy, whether it be a Sabu or whether it be somebody over in Japan who's some dynamite wrestler, that no one would have ever heard of without a newsletter, and then if a wrestling company sees that. I would think that if I was running a wrestling company and I didn't have time to watch all these tapes and there was a newsletter that I respected and they said, to use Great Sasuke as an example, "This guy is just dynamite and he's a great young wrestler." I would at least want to see a film of this guy and judge for myself. I wouldn't just say, "I'm going to hire him without looking at him," but I'd say, "I think I need to see a film of this guy." So in that way it could be a positive. Like Art Barr, who has turned into such a great worker, if I was in one of the major promotions I would at least want to look at a tape of the guy and think about it. It can be a negative also. There's a certain mentality in the business that it's a con man business that they have to fool the public and that the idea is to fool the public. And to me the idea of professional wrestling is not to fool the public, the idea is to make money. The idea is to draw fans, to create interest, and ultimately make money. I think that a lot of times people will look at something where I'll say what kind of a direction a promotion is going in with a match, and someone goes, "Oh my God, it's in the Observer, let's change our direction." Then I think it's a negative because of how they're taking it. It's like, if that direction makes sense and I say that that's the direction it looks like they're going because it makes sense, then why do something that doesn't make sense just to prove that we're unpredictable? If their surprises are good and logical, then it's a good surprise. The object is not to surprise hardcore fans. I'll give you an example. A lot of people at the last Clash called me up and they were like, "Boy, I could have predicted that Flair and Hogan angle going into it." Well, if you're going to do Flair and Hogan at the pay-per-view and you're smart and you understand the business pretty good, of course you can predict it because they did the very logical thing to do. If they did something different, they'd be morons because then they've got a pay-per-view and they've done an angle that doesn't build it up. If there was someone in there running WCW who was just going, "We're going to do an angle to fool those hardcores. We're not going to do an angle with Flair and Hogan because they know there's a match, we'll do an angle with Flair and Sting." That's great, it would have surprised everyone, and it would have made no sense whatsoever and it would have been stupid. The bottom line is, the business is to create interest and to make money, it's not to fool hardcores and it's not to fool the Observer. I know for a fact that there's been times where people have changed finishes that made logical sense because they were like, "We don't want the Observer to figure it out," and they do something that's much less logical and in the long run drew less money just to prove that they were unpredictable. And I think, "That's really smart. They proved that they're unpredictable, but they ended up losing money." And actually some of those companies went out of business. Almost all of them did, not for that reason, but that mentality didn't help.

**Clark:** This involves how widespread the Observer is in the industry. Based on your records, about how many people working in the wrestling business subscribe to the Observer?

**Meltzer:** I don't know a number, but it's several hundred. I think I counted once and there were like three hundred names that I knew. But there's a lot of people who probably get it under their wife's maiden name and things like that, so I'm sure the number's higher than that. But it's in the hundreds.

**Clark:** But do you send out a lot of comps to those working in the wrestling business?

**Meltzer:** Not a lot. I mean I would think there's a few dozen.

**Clark:** Why do you think the WWF and WCW have forcefully decided to not cooperate with the Observer and haven't accepted it as actual press?

**Meltzer:** It's weird because I get cooperation and I don't. I get tons of cooperation from certain people in WWF and WCW, so it's not like they don't cooperate. I do get cooperation, but at the same time obviously I can tell there's a lot of resentment from people in both companies. But, as to why? Nobody likes to be criticized, and I don't hold back on criticism, especially when it's a national promotion.

**Clark:** Do you feel that at any point in doing the Observer that you may have been biased or in any way partial towards some performers in the business based on personal relationships with those people or a personal liking for their work in wrestling?

**Meltzer:** Definitely. I mean it depends on what you mean by biased. The Observer is not just news, it's news and opinion, and whenever you have an opinion on anything, you're biased. That's just inherent. So inherently the Observer is going to be biased. It's then a question of whether I will give a match more stars because I may like or dislike the guy. I hope not. Maybe there's an argument that that's the case, but I hope not. I sure try like crazy not to let that influence me. I know I've given five star matches to people who I cannot personally stand. So I like to think that that's not the case.

**Clark:** There was one situation that I could think of, and that was when Ric Flair came out on a TV show and said that he had never taken steroids or any other drugs. Do you think because of his popularity amongst the hardcores that those comments might have been overlooked as compared to when Hulk Hogan came out with his false statements about steroid use?

**Meltzer:** It wasn't overlooked because I wrote about it and I was pretty critical of it. So I can't say it was overlooked. I think that it could have been a bigger story and it would have been had the same thing happened with Hulk Hogan. Right after that thing happened, Flair went to Japan for Tenryu. I talked to Ric in Japan and I said, "God, I wish you hadn't said that," and we had a conversation about the whole thing. He knew what I was going to write about it and he said, "Well, I've never done steroids." And I go, "You said you've never done steroids or any illegal drug." And he just goes, "I haven't," and I go, "Look what happened to Hogan when he did that." And he just goes, "Don't worry, it's not going to happen." Ric Flair, what he's done and what he hasn't done, I've never personally seen it. I've been around the guy, not a ton, it's not like that I'm best buddies with him. Not one person came to me and said, "Hey, Ric Flair's on steroids, Ric Flair's used steroids, Ric Flair lied." Not one person said that. But with Hogan, a day after Arsenio, it was floodgates. Nobody wanted to go public with it at the beginning, and then finally a couple months later people would go public with it and that's when it became a real big deal. With Flair, it didn't become a big deal for that reason. If Ric Flair used steroids and went on TV and said he didn't, and he did go on TV and said he never had, then to me he should have been treated the same way as Hulk Hogan, and those were the exact words I wrote in the Observer. Bruce Mitchell wrote something in the *Torch* and it was about the good wrestlers like Arn Anderson also using steroids just like other guys like Ultimate Warrior, the Warlord, and Hulk Hogan. I don't know that Flair did as a fact, one way or the other. I know Tully Blanchard did because he testified and said he started using them in 1977, and he was a good wrestler. Obviously, the Steiners have used steroids. I don't think that's any great revelation. And people were going, "Well, at least they're good workers." To me that has nothing to do with it. It has nothing to do with if they're good workers or not, I think that all standards should be the same. Hogan's the biggest star so he took more heat for lying than anyone else would have, but Ric Flair's the second biggest star, and if he lied, personally I think that he should have taken not the kind of heat Hogan did because it wasn't on national TV, but within the wrestling industry. It's no different. If people say that that was unfair because he didn't take the heat, if he did do steroids, I agree, it is unfair. It is unfair, no doubt about it.

**Clark:** Have you formed any true, genuine, valuable friendships with anyone in the wrestling business and how do you go about figuring out or sensing those who are being genuine to you and those who are simply working you?

**Meltzer:** You never know for sure in wrestling or in life. It's a sad fact. I think one of the sad things about this trial in a sense is with Vince McMahon and Hulk Hogan. Three years ago they were like almost viewed as one in the same and they were two liars about steroids. Now all of a sudden, Vince McMahon's lawyers are going out there, "Hulk Hogan lied about steroids." Before when Billy Graham or Bruno Sammartino said that Hulk Hogan lied about steroids, Vince McMahon's company was like, "How dare these guys say this." And now, look who's saying what. They're saying the same thing and they're saying worse about Hogan than anybody else. It's just funny that here these guys were supposedly best friends. I would hope that my best friends three years from now don't go out there and all of a sudden say all the things that my enemies say today. I think it's kind of sad when friends turn on each other. But then again, maybe they're not really friends and they were just drawn together. I like to believe that there are a few people, and there are not that many, in this business that I consider very good friends. I like to think that. Whether it's the case or not, I don't know. I would not say that about many people in this business at all, but I do like to think that there's a few that I consider very good friends.

**Clark:** Could you describe your experience and what you did while working for the World Wrestling Federation?

**Meltzer:** I talked to Louie Dundero and Terry Garvin later, and all I pretty much did was fill them in on what was going on in Japan.

**Clark:** Were you paid by them for your services?

**Meltzer:** Yeah, I was paid. It was a very short period of time. In hindsight I think it was a completely stupid thing to do. At the time I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't think it was stupid at the time, but now I feel like it was a dumb thing.

**Clark:** For some people who have subscribed to the Observer since its inception, some seem to believe that there is now less detailed inside and behind the scenes news on wrestling as compared to several years ago. What are your feelings about that and do you feel that there has been a change in the amount of inside news that is printed in the Observer?

**Meltzer:** You know what's funny? It's that there's far more. I know that there's far more because I have a lot more sources and my attitude hasn't changed one bit and I have access to tons more information. Before, a couple years ago, when I was using the typewriter, that took up more space. I couldn't get as much in as I can get in now with the way the printing is. Every week I was always having two to three pages of letters and then I was even having Bowdren the Booker for a long time, which was another page. So you're talking about three to four pages every week that wasn't news at all. Now news is every little bit of space. There are more results now than before because I didn't cover the independents as well. I think there should be a place of record for a guy who's wrestling on a show. He should get his name in the paper. There are people who like them and there are wrestlers who like their name in the Observer. I find it interesting when you see a name like Wahoo McDaniel, maybe in a way it's sad, wrestling in front of a hundred people every week here and there. But at least you know that this guy or that guy is still around. But there's way more inside information out than there ever was. I think people kind of imagine that there isn't because there's so much more when it comes to Japan or Mexico and they perceive that as not inside information, when in fact it's *real* inside information. I've pretty much had the same standard all along. I think there's people who want to find out like who's sleeping with who and all that, and I don't consider myself a tabloid writer at all. I'm what I am. I don't consider myself what would be a traditional, serious news writer, but every wrestler's private life is his private life up until the point it affects the business. Maybe there would be an argument with Randy Savage and Elizabeth's divorce because they were so public that I could have written more about that. But it's like, they went through enough hell. I can very well accept an argument that since they were such public figures that maybe I should have gone and looked at the divorce papers. In hindsight, maybe I should have, but I don't know. But that's a rare exception. How many husbands and wives are that public figures. The difference with them is that they were public figures and their marriage was part of the storyline and they were selling tickets based on their marriage. Maybe I blew that one, but those types of things don't happen everyday.

**Clark:** According to Observer statistics and reliable sources, in 1993 the WWF lost money and WCW lost around $6 million, and the independent groups as well were certainly not raking in profits. What do you think this says about the health of the wrestling industry in the United States now?

**Meltzer:** It's not healthy at all. I think that we've been talking about the fact that it's not a healthy industry. If Titan didn't make a profit and I know for sure most of the other ones didn't, it's not a healthy industry. I don't have any cure answers, but I do know that I'm very worried about the future of the wrestling business. It's been several years I've seen a lot of this coming. You just see these companies like Smoky Mountain and you look at the attendance figures and things like that. Eventually you've got to make a profit or you're not going to survive. I mean, I don't know how long people have. Maybe Turner can go forever, but ultimately in any small business you've got to make a profit or you're not going to survive. I wish that there were ways that they would.

**Clark:** How much of a difference is there in the financial healthiness of foreign wrestling promotions such as Japan and Mexico as compared to the United States?

**Meltzer:** I know the Japanese promotions are making a ton of money. In Japan there's about twenty-one, twenty-two promotions right now. I can't even keep track, there's so many. I'm sure the smaller ones are not making money, but the big ones are making money. So I would say in that way I see the Japanese industry as being far, far more healthy than the American industry. Mexico has more grass roots and there's way more wrestling going on there than in the United States, and population-wise it's a much smaller country and geographically it's a much smaller country. There's more wrestlers being developed. That aspect of wrestling which we lost when the territories died, which is the constant influx of new talent, is very, very healthy in Mexico as compared to the United States. As far as financially, there's three groups. UWA is very near dead. EMLL is not doing very well. AAA is doing pretty good. So I would say that overall the financial health of the big three promotions in Mexico probably isn't any better than the United States. But at the grass roots level, it's a stronger business. I would say Japan overall is just a much stronger business.

**Clark:** What future do you see for the existence of Japanese and Mexican promotions and/or their unique styles in the United States wrestling scene and what effect do you think they would have here?

**Meltzer:** The main effect Japanese wrestling has had is that a lot of the younger American wrestlers, and you see it in watching their matches, have watched the tapes and emulate a lot of the stuff. So it opens up our style more. But as far as a Japanese wrestling promotion coming to the country, right now they would die if they did. Maybe if they could get a really good TV and they'd have to have one hell of an announcer to get it over, at that point I think that it probably could get some TV interest. But right now, let's face it, it's almost impossible to draw at live shows. Even when you have a good product, it's really hard to get people to come out to the building. WWF can for a big show, but it's just so hard. I don't think that a new company could come in here with mainly Japanese people and draw at the gate. Although I think that if it was done right, it probably could do decently on television. Mexico of course is the big difference because there's a strong Mexican culture in certain cities and in those cities they've already proven it can draw like crazy. I don't know how many cities that is, but there are some. I think that if American wrestlers watch tapes of the Mexican wrestlers and vice versa, it will tend to expand the style of wrestlers in both countries. I don't like the attitude that a lot of people in wrestling have. I know as a fact there are Mexican wrestlers that have the same attitudes vice versa of the American wrestlers. They kind of group them together and think that the American wrestlers are "lazy, they take too many steroids, they don't really know how to work." And the American wrestlers will say, "They're stuff looks fake and they don't know how to work." In fact, in both cases, it's a terribly closed-minded attitude because there's a hell of a lot to learn and there's some phenomenal workers in both countries.

**Clark:** The history of wrestling shows that there has always been a superior promotion in the United States. Of course, the WWF has held that distinction for many, many years now...

**Meltzer:** It's not so much that United States has a superior promotion, but the history of wrestling has always shown in an area there's usually been a dominant promotion. In the old days everyone had their little region and they were the main TV show in the region and they were the main promotion in the region. As a monopoly industry, which wrestling was in these regions, it usually did fairly well because it was a monopoly. In the 70s there were certain areas that I can recall had big promotional war. Detroit had a real big promotional war. Atlanta had a real nasty promotional war in the 70s. Los Angeles did in the late 60s and Texas was more in the 80s. But in the cases of these cities that had promotional wars, eventually one promotion usually kicked the other one's ass. One of the things that I learned from that is that--I remember this from about '83, '84, when the expansion started--there were a lot of attitudes of a lot of people in wrestling that turned out to be terribly wrong at the time about what would happen. If Titan could get the dominant TV and people thought of them as the dominant promotion, the other promotion in most cases is going to widdle away and die because most people in a certain area are not going to support two different companies. For whatever reason, they will decide "this is major league and this is minor league." And wrestling doesn't have enough fans to support what people perceive as minor league wrestling. So that's why a lot of these companies die out. In baseball, there's millions and millions and millions of baseball fans. Minor league baseball has actually changed in the last twenty years. But ten, fifteen years ago when I was thinking about this, minor league baseball in most cases was not drawing very well. The minor leagues were in very poor financial shape compared to years before. The reason was is because even though there's always baseball fans that love baseball, they weren't going to go see a minor league game but they'd go see the major leagues. In wrestling it's the same way. When people see a big glitzy national promotion, Bob Geigel in Kansas City, who was the only game in town, or even Verne Gagne in Minneapolis, all of a sudden they didn't look like the major league anymore and eventually people stop going to their matches because they're not going to go see minor league wrestling.

**Clark:** How would you compare the WWF's product these days to WCW's product? and which promotion do you think will lead the business into the twentieth century?

**Meltzer:** From what it seems, WCW's hardly running any house shows. I think WWF is probably far superior at the house shows in that I think that they're more progressive and they've done the special effects. The Mexicans did it first and I really saw how the special effects really made the regular house shows seem special. I think that's one of the reasons why down there AAA is running around in all these cities and packing them like crazy. The EMLL, which is traditional like a WCW, they're sitting back and just going, "People want to wrestling, people want to see the traditional style," because AAA in Mexico is not a traditional style. To me that's a backwards attitude. People always want to see something new, they want to see something different. They don't want to see the same and they're going to a show that they want to think is major league. One of the reasons that basketball and hockey have increased in popularity in the last several years is that you go to it and you feel like you're at a major league thing. You're not just seeing a basketball game, you're seeing an event. You're not just seeing a hockey game, you're seeing an event. And the WWF has been very good at that. You're not seeing a bunch of wrestling matches, you're seeing an event. I think the things that they did this year were a very positive move and it showed. The houses went up. As far as product itself, the wrestling matches, I think the WCW pay-per-views this year for the most part have been better than the WWF. I think that they have better wrestlers. I think the WWF's TV is better because they get their storylines over better. It's funny, WCW got all the good announcers, but the WWF announcers seem better. Vince is a phenomenal announcer. Lawler's very good, but the rest of them really aren't that good. Savage is downright terrible yet I watch it and I think that they get the emotions and the storylines over. I watch WCW and you've got these announcers all trying to get themselves over and not the product and they're all out there trying to crack their one-liners, and the product doesn't get over.

**Clark:** Which promotion do you think will lead the wrestling business in the United States into the twentieth century?

**Meltzer:** It's hard to tell. Whoever's the most progressive thinker is going to end up being the leader. If Vince McMahon--if he's even around, which is another story--were to adopt the attitude of his predecessors, which is "this is what wrestling is and we're not going to change it,"--and he's a smart guy--then there will be a day when they will no longer be the leader. It's going to be real hard to overtake the leader. The only people who can beat the WWF right now is the WWF. WWF is pro wrestling in the United States to most people, so they will be the leader unless they screw up. And if they screw up and leave the opening, somebody who's really smart and really lucky and in the right place at the right time can take it from them. But if the WWF stays on their toes, you can't take it from them.

**Clark:** How would you compare the three most popular independent promotions amongst hardcore fans in this country (Smoky Mountain Wrestling, Eastern Championship Wrestling, United States Wrestling Association) and what are your thoughts on them being able to survive in the future?

**Meltzer:** It's all a matter of financial backing and we all know the situation. ECW, as long as Tod wants to keep it going, it will survive. Smoky Mountain, as long as Jim has the financial resources to survive, they'll pinch pennies to the bitter end and they'll be there and survive. And if they can't, then they won't. It's economic and I don't know enough about the economics and the brains of the people who are funding these groups to know how long they can go. As far as product goes, I like ECW a lot. I won't say I didn't like it, but I like it more now than I did before. I always kind of liked it and I always thought it was kind of entertaining. Some of the things I think are a little hardcore and they take a lot of chances, but I like the tapes that I've seen in the last eight to twelve weeks. I have grown to like ECW because when I watch the TV they'll be something new that I haven't seen before or a new approach. The way the TV's paced and the beginnings and the way they sell stuff and the lines that they get off, it's really brilliantly done. I don't know if it can financially survive, that's a different story, but there's a lot of brains behind what they do. Smoky Mountain, I really enjoyed it for a long time and I was really entertained by the TV. Since their business went down, I can see it from watching the TV because the TV has kind of gotten stale and some of the characters have gotten stale to me. Hopefully, things will change and that will no longer be the case in the future. USWA, they sure know how to promote Memphis, Tennessee as far as them not really having a lot of talent. Of the three groups, they have by far the least amount of talent. But they do know how to promote Memphis. They're out there doing usually decent business by today's standards every week. It's not good business, but it's decent. Some weeks it's poor and some weeks it's good. It's not like they're getting a hundred or two hundred people in Memphis, but in some of their other cities they are. And they can draw without Jerry Lawler. I used to think that USWA would do real well until the day Jerry Lawler retires, and when Jerry Lawler's gone they will die. But now when Jerry Lawler's not there on a Monday night, the house really doesn't go down at all. They've got their core audience and they've got a few guys. One of the things that they have is tradition, and no one else in wrestling has tradition, except the WWF a little bit. But everyone else killed their tradition. They still have their's so everyone in Memphis knows that there's wrestling pretty much every Monday night since the beginning of time. Outside of that territory, there's no cities in this country where people know like "every Friday night there's wrestling in my town." That doesn't exist anymore.

**Clark:** An issue that you write about often is the fantasy vs reality differentiation problem that many in the business have a hard time grappling with. What do you think are the effects of not being able to separate those situations on those working in the pro wrestling industry?

**Meltzer:** It depends. It can be really tragic. When you dilute yourself and then you've got to face reality and then all of a sudden you don't know how to deal with it, I think people have killed themselves over it, more than one. It can be really dangerous as far as that goes. It's weird because the whole business is built on fantasy and it's built on working people and people get caught up in it when they're in there and when they're big stars. It's a real weird thing because they get the egos that they're big stars and everything and then all of a sudden in some cases with a snap of a finger you can be written out and you're nobody again. There's just so many examples of guys who can go from being a big star and then all of a sudden you get into a fight with the owner and you quit and you go independently, and all of a sudden it's like you're nobody. Once you're off TV everyone forgets you. I think the Hogan thing is showing us one thing. Even though people say they're fans of wrestlers, people are really fans of wrestling companies because if every Hulk Hogan fan was a Hulk Hogan fan, then WCW's TV ratings would go way up. Hulk Hogan came in and it didn't happen. They didn't move at all because there's WCW fans and there's WWF fans, no matter who from WWF crosses over and visa versa. Like when Ric Flair went to the WWF, I'm sure there were Ric Flair hardcore fans who might have watched WWF closer, but I don't think Ric Flair being in WWF helped their TV ratings one iota and he didn't draw any better than anyone else would have in the same position. I don't think he drew any worse than anybody else would have, but he didn't knock the world on fire. When he was wrestling Hogan they drew big crowds, but it should have, it was Ric Flair and Hulk Hogan. Afterwards he wrestled Roddy Piper and they didn't sell out houses just because he was Ric Flair.

**Clark:** What effect do you think this fantasy type of atmosphere wrestling portrays has on its viewers?

**Meltzer:** The wrestling fans are the same kinds of fans as of everything. They have their people they like and they have their people that they don't like and they like to dilute themselves into the fact that the people they like can do no wrong. Sometimes their fans have problems with reality. The biggest thing is this thing going on with O.J. Simpson. That's pointing out that no matter what anyone says about wrestling fans, and some of it's true, and it would be stupid for me to say that all football fans think O.J.'s innocent, that's a ludicrous statement, and I'm not saying that he's quilty and I'm not saying that he's innocent, but there are a hell of a lot of people who just are in denial and are unwilling to accept the possibility that he's guilty and are trying to create their own illusion as to why this is happening because he couldn't be guilty. Even if he is guilty, they'll say that because he was their football hero or he was a nice guy on a TV commercial. I think that wrestling is very similar to that, so it's no different from a lot of aspects of American life.

**Clark:** Do you feel that there is a problem with the product with the violence in wrestling or just the simple aspect of hating and fighting people that wrestling portrays to young children watching?

**Meltzer:** I think that in some ways wrestling may not be so good for real young children. There's some of the teaching of hate that I think is bad. If you're watching it but you're watching it in a way where you understand kind of what it is and are accepting it as entertainment, I think when you're old enough to understand it's entertiainment, I think that wrestling is just fine and there's nothing wrong with it. But if I had really young children I don't know that I would want them to watch wrestling. When they're old enough to sort of grasp what it really is, I would have no problem with it. I don't think there's anything wrong with being a wrestling fan at all, but if I had really young children I don't think I would want them watching wrestling because there's certain attitudes and certain values that wrestling teaches that I think are pretty bad values. Like settling things through violence rather than through reasoning and hatred of foreigners and hatred of people who aren't like you or aren't from your part of town. When you're old enough to understand that this is what it is and you know it's a show for you to be entertained, there's nothing wrong with it. But for a real young child that can't differentiate, I don't think that wrestling's good for them.

**Clark:** What do you think it is about wrestling that causes many people in it and around it to lose a sense of truthfulness and to gain the ability to work people like it is a sixth sense?

**Meltzer:** I think it's atmosphere. I think a lot of people may come in without that, but once they're in it everyday they develop it. I think it's just something that perpetuates from generation to generation. I almost naively would like to think that maybe the next generation of people who run wrestling and who are wrestlers will learn how this generation of people running the business fucked up many aspects of the business royally and will change it. But I know it's not going to happen. I wish it would and I wish that people would go, "This generation of wrestling is of disrespect and killed a great deal of its popularity and this is how it did it--by continually working in situations where it would have been best to tell the truth." But yet if the same thing happens ten years from now, I just think that they will repeat the same mistakes. When the thing happened with Kerry Von Erich, it was a real shocking thing and a lot of people were saying to me, "Don't you think this may finally change the business?" Because this very, very prominent guy died and it's pretty clear he died because--I'm not saying the business killed him because that's very unfair--but there were things in the business, the fantasy-reality, which I really believe. had to do with it. The fact that he was living in fantasy and all of a sudden reality came and he couldn't cope with it, that probably did contribute to his death. Yet did the business change one iota? I mean, not one bit. And you and I have talked about that. A couple of weeks later it was like the same old business as usual. It was a real prominent guy who died, and yet three weeks later it was business as usual.

**Clark:** Are you pretty good now at judging whether someone is telling you the truth or working you because of dealing with a lot of dishonest and unscrupulous people in wrestling?

**Meltzer:** With people who are way, way over the egde, it's pretty easy to see. I think I've gotten better. I'm definitely better than I was ten years ago. Some people who fashion themselves as being pretty good workers, I think I've done pretty good seeing through them because when you think you're a really good worker you keep trying to work. Then it's sort of like, "Well, God," I mean he's still working and he's still working and working. Some of them are very good at it but you can see through them because they just keep doing it. I think the ones who are probably hard would be someone who's like ninety percent honest and ten percent dishonest. I think those would be pretty damn hard to see through and I don't know if I would be able to see through them. The ones who are ninety percent dishonest and ten percent honest, and there's a lot of them like that, those aren't that hard to see through.

**Clark:** I have a theory that if you constantly deal with and associate yourself with people who are always working people and who are dishonest that it will impact your sense of honesty and principles.

**Meltzer:** I absolutely believe that.

**Clark:** Have you been affected by dealing with these people who do exist in the wrestling business?

**Meltzer:** I know that my attitude about people has been changed. It's been a tremendous eye-opening experience. I think as far as me myself, has it affected me? Only to the sense that I'm far less trustworthy than I would have been years ago. I think that's the only thing. I'm far less trustworthy of strangers than I would have been had I not been dealing with wrestling. In many, many ways I was brought up in a very naive manner. I was brought up by some incredibly honest people. I mean, my parents never lied to me. I thought thay my friends never lied to me, and maybe they did and maybe they didn't, and I thought that all the people who you hung around with and that you liked that you all always tell each other the truth. I was the absolute worst person in that sense because of my upbringing to be doing what I'm doing. I was the worst person to fall into this situation. In the beginning of it I just figured that anyone who was my friend was going to be telling me the truth. Boy, you learn real fast that this is wrestling and it doesn't work that way.

**Clark:** Do you have any really, really interesting or really, really bizarre stories about personal experiences you have had with some people in the wrestling business?

**Meltzer:** I've probably had a million of them but I can't think of any offhand. I've had a jillion fascinating conversations with some brilliant people and some psychotic people and some psychotic brilliant people, and some idiots. I've had a lot of fun experiences, that's for sure. I've been real fortunate to travel and that wrestling has made me travel because I don't like to travel, but I'll travel for wrestling. It's made me learn a lot of stuff and exposed myself to so many things that I never would have had there not been wrestling. It's opened my eyes in a lot of ways. I think that it's definitely helped when I read and analyze the news. It opens your eyes as to how the media works. One of the best things for me that's ever happened with the wrestling thing is that I've had so much dealings with outside media and seeing how it works, so when I watch the news I think I can look at it in different ways than someone who just sits there and watches the news. Overall, I would consider this wrestling experience ninety-five to ninety-seven percent positive. I'm not saying the wrestling business is, but my experiences have been more positive than negative and the wrestling thing has been a tremendously good thing for me compared to what I would be doing without it or how my life would be had I not been exposed to this. I think I would be a very different person, but I don't think that I would be nearly as smart in a different way.

**Clark:** How often do you travel these days to cover wrestling and where do you most often go on your trips?

**Meltzer:** It's not like a regular thing, it's just if there's something I want to see. I don't go to WCW pay-per-views--I used to go to all of them--just because they're on TV and so much of the pay-per-view is the presentation of the show rather than actually just watching the matches. In that way I almost think that for the pay-per-views for WWF and WCW that it's actually better for me not to go to the show because the announcing's so important and the real show is how it looks on pay-per-view. I went to a lot of WCW pay-per-views that when I was at live I enjoyed the show and I would come home and everyone was thumbs down, thumbs down. The important thing is for the 100,000 watching it on the pay-per-view, not for the 5,000 people live. So I think it's much better for me not to go, even though I miss the atmosphere of being there live. I really think that it's very important for me to go to Japan once or twice a year just because that business evolves in a different way than our business. Even though I watch the tapes religously from Japan, there's nothing like being there live because you learn so much more live. The same with Mexico, it was an eye-opening experience this year going to major shows in Mexico. It broadens your perspective and you learn that a lot of things that are said about certain things and a lot of things that people accept as fact aren't fact at all. The big thing here when they talk about Mexican wrestling is that the fans are so wild and out of control and they throw loads of diapers. That did happen one night in Los Angeles and it was really scary. But when I went down to Mexico, the fans are not as astute as Japanese fans, but as far as being wild, those arenas were safer than probably eighty-five percent of the arenas in the United States. They're not so wild, they were nice and polite. I was probably one of five Americans in the building with 11,000 people, and they were so nice to me. It wasn't like they hated Americans or anything like that.

**Clark:** As far as your personal life, what else other than wrestling and the Observer is a meaningful part of your life and consumes your time?

**Meltzer:** Wrestling and the Observer consumes an incredible amount of time. I'm very much into the beach, more than I should be. That's like my escape. During the winter I don't do that. There's the weight training. I hadn't done any of it because I was sick and because of the operations and I had an arm injury, but now I'm getting back to doing that. That's kind of a hobby of mine. I have a lot of friends that I hang around with, none of whom know anything about wrestling and none of whom ever talk to me about wrestling. And I don't like it when they do. I talk wrestling day and night with people and I love doing it, but there's a time to get away from it. I don't talk to my friends about their businesses too much and they don't talk to me about wrestling too much. Although, I've been asked a hell of a lot about this trial in the last three days. Even in the gym, people were talking to me about the trial. It shocked me because it hasn't gotten that much media coverage.

**Clark:** Do you ever think that you spend too much time with wrestling?

**Meltzer:** I don't think that I've burned out on it. I think a lot of people would be in the situation I'm in. If wrestling was all the same I think I would burn out on it really fast. But the fact is that there's so many different styles and there's so many things that are changing and there's always something new to learn, so I think that's why I don't burn out on it. At times I think I spent too much on wrestling; absolutely, no doubt about it. As you get older you're perspective of certain things change. When I was in my 20s I would say that the idea that I spent too much time on wrestling never even occurred to me and I loved every minute. I still love it most of the time that I'm doing it. But in my 20s the idea of waking up at nine in the morning and working on wrestling until 2am, I thought absolutely nothing negative whatsoever about doing that. Now I'll still do it, but sometimes when I think about doing it, I'm thinking, "My God, aren't there other things I should do?" My life is way more well-rounded than it was five to seven years ago. I think what has happened with me is that if my attitude has changed in that way, it's not like wrestling has strangled me to the point where I want to do this and want to do this but because of wrestling I can't do any of it or because of wrestling I haven't been able to live a life. I never think like that. I work all I can on the wrestling and I spend a lot of time on it, but I don't feel like wrestling has strangled my life. Spending all that time on wrestling has been mainly a positive. I would say that the only negative is that people who have had relationships with me, I think that the wrestling has been exceedingly hard on all of them and always will be because of the amount of time I spend.

**Clark:** So in that sense, would you say you're married to the Observer?

**Meltzer:** Oh, I am. The Observer's like my baby. I wouldn't say it's my addiction, but the Observer is more of a part of my life than I think most people could really imagine. I think that Wade Keller is probably the only person probably in this world who actually could understand just how big a part of my life it really is. I believe if this trial going on right now had happened maybe a couple years ago, I would kill myself doing the Observer on the weekend, I would fly to New York and take notes for five days, fly home on Friday and do the Observer, fly back to New York on Monday. I would have done that and I actually in a sense think that I really should do that, and yet I'm here, I'm not in New York. I will go to New York at some point, but the idea of doing that for three straight weeks, I think that there was a time where I would have done that. But believe me, doing that is something I wouldn't want to do; I don't like to travel, I don't like New York for more than three days, and I love California. But I think there was a time where I would have done that out of a sense of duty, even knowing that I wouldn't like it. The reason that I don't burnout on the Observer anymore and I won't is because I never let the Observer ruin my life. There have been times in the past where I have. Absolutely, when I used to do yearbooks. Every year in December the Wrestling Observer Yearbook ruined my life for two months. It absolutely was the most hideous, horrifying time of my life, but I did it out of a sense of loyalty and everyone loved it. Now I will never do another yearbook because I will never let the Observer ruin my life.

# SABU SABU

The following interview with one of wrestling's hottest independent stars in the United States and Japan, Sabu (Terry Brunk), 30, was conducted via telephone from his home near Lansing, Michigan on January 27, 1994. Sabu Merchandise is now open for business at 132 Covington Road, Philadelphia, PA 19120 and the hotline number is (215)552-8901. The Sabu Fan Club offers a lifetime membership for $15, which includes a Sabu biography, five action photos, 8x10 photo, dictionary of moves, membership certificate autographed by Sabu, and a piece of table broken by Sabu himself. Sabu's t-shirt displaying him moonsaulting a table is $15 and an autographed 8x10 autographed photo is $5. A Sabu vs Chris Candido ladder match from CA on 6/19 is on sale for $15 from Ron Hed, PO Box 730502, San Jose , CA 95173.

**John Clark:** Could you describe your childhood and maybe how some of those experiences growing up have effected you in your life?

**Sabu:** (laughs) My childhood was nothing. It was basic boring stuff, nothing exciting. I'd say it was normal. I was the youngest and I grew up with my two older brothers. They beat me up all the time. But then as I got to about ninth grade I starting beating them up. Then in tenth and eleventh grade I was easily whipping them both.

**Clark:** Who were the most influencial people in your life growing up?

**Sabu:** My mom and my uncle. Sheik influenced me with the wrestling, of course. My mom because she loved me.

**Clark:** What interests and dreams did you have as a kid growing up?

**Sabu:** Being a world champion. That's it, really.

**Clark:** How did wrestling enter your life and when did you decide that professional wrestling was for you?

**Sabu:** I knew that ever since I can remember. I was probably three years old. But I started wrestling when I was in seventh grade in junior high. I've always had the intentions of being a wrestler. Everything was geared to being a wrestler ever since I can remember.

**Clark:** How did you go about getting involved in it and what intentions did you have getting into it?

**Sabu:** I wanted to be a wrestler because of Sheik. It came naturally, it was easy. In school I did pretty decent. I didn't like my first year of wrestling in seventh grade in junior high because it wasn't like what I thought it was. I only went about half a year and I quit. Then I said, "No matter if I like it or not, if I'm going to be a professional wrestler I had to stick this out." This was back in eighth grade. So I stuck it out through the eighth grade and I did decent. Ninth grade I did great. Tenth grade I did even better. Each year I got even better, it came easier. I took a year off and then I got shot.

I knew I was going to be a wrestler and I always said I would when I got done with school, and I got bigger. I wasn't really doing anything to get bigger for that year, I was waiting for it to happen, but it never did. But I got out of the hospital about a week after I got shot and I was working out right then. I built my own ring in my basement. I just took bumps, I taught myself to take bumps and shit like that. After about six months of that I went out and told Sheik I wanted to be a wrestler and asked if I could come out. He said I could and he trained me.

As for intentions going into the business, money didn't even phase me. I wanted money, but I knew that would come later, and I knew it wasn't as easy as it appeared. When I was coming out of high school the wrestling that was on was Georgia Championship Wrestling. Everything I saw there looked pretty pathetic. I just figured I could be better than those guys. I thought I was. I could just take better bumps, but I didn't know how to work a match. Sheik taught me all that.

**Clark:** Back to the situation where you got shot, could you describe what happened and how that related to you starting lifting weights?

**Sabu:** I got shot in the teeth. Actually, it went through the side of my cheek and it went down my throat and shot out the front of my mouth. I was at a party a couple months after we graduated. It was open-house. Something happened and this guy pulled these guns out of his socks, he had shorts on. He had two guns, a blank gun and a real gun. He shot my friend in the hip and then he took off running. I ran after him, caught him and I threw him down. I thought he got rid of the one gun and that it was the blank gun he got rid of. I didn't know there was two guns. Then when I was holding him down, he pushed that fuckin' gun to my face and pulled the trigger. It wasn't too bad. It shattered the inside of my face and broke my teeth up and my throat. I couldn't eat for like six months and I just drank protein shit. After getting out of the hospital I started lifting weights. About six months after that I went out and saw Sheik.

**Clark:** So before that happened you weren't into weight training?

**Sabu:** Right, I was only in amateur wrestling where you didn't want to gain weight. So I hadn't gotten into the weight lifting part yet.

**Clark:** Could you talk about some of the problems you might have run into when you were first trying to get into the wrestling business?

**Sabu:** I worked out and practiced for about a year and a half before I had my first match. Then I had my first match and that went good. Right after that I worked everyday for about three or four months, and I thought it would always be like that. Then I hit a dry spell that was only in the summer when I worked for David Bearman. I went to Singapore my first year, then it just died. Nothing happened after that.

**Clark:** What impressions did you get of what the wrestling business was all about when you were starting out in it?

**Sabu:** It sucked, but I still wanted to do it. When I first started getting into it I thought I could do what I wanted and do anything I wanted to anybody I wanted to. I figured if a guy didn't want to work, I'd kick the shit out of him. But you can't just do that and expect to keep working. I thought I could be a shooter no matter if anybody else was or not. The Sheik never really told me when he was training me that it wasn't a shoot. All I thought was that the guys were just wimps and I thought I could whip them. Sheik never said anything different and that I couldn't whip them, until my first match.

The guy that I was working with, we basically shot with each other, except for we fed each other. Like he'd let me punch him in the face, but I'd hit him like about 90 percent or more. The same he'd do to me. But Sheik never said not to do that until our match, and he said, "Just take it easy." I said, "Well, I'm going to pin him." He said, "No, don't pin him. Just go ten minutes and try not to kill each other." He never smartened us up. I picked up that, that's how it was. It was easier that way. I think if he would have come out and said, "This is a bullshit business, and this is how you do it and work everything," I would have been looking like everybody else. Most guys before they get trained, they get smartened up first. I think that's wrong. They should first get stretched for a long time and then get smartened up.

**Clark:** It is known to everyone that your uncle, the Sheik, had quite an influence on you. Could you describe what you have learned from him both in the ring and also other aspects of the wrestling business?

**Sabu:** Everybody goes, "The Sheik didn't teach you this and the Sheik didn't teach you that." They're right. He mostly taught me attitude and to treat everybody as if they're the same size. I do, even if I was a shooter or if it's a work. Sometimes I can't do everything I want to. You can't just do anything you want. But I'm not afraid to potato somebody and I'm not afraid to get potatoed. I think that's a major hold back of a lot of guys. They're afraid to hurt somebody, which is okay. Who wants to get hurt? But you can't be afraid to get hurt.

**Clark:** How exactly did you learn how to wrestle?

**Sabu:** I learned how to wrestle in school. Sheik taught me how to professionally wrestle. But he didn't get in there and teach me the dropkicks and the moonsaults and jumping off the top rope stuff. He taught me the finer points of it, the stuff you have to know. The other stuff you can do it, or you can take it or leave it. It's up to you if you want to do that stuff. But there's other stuff you have to do. Sheik taught me the stuff I had to do because that stuff is more important than the moonsaults and the other shit.

**Clark:** How did you learn to do the "extra stuff" you do in the ring?

**Sabu:** It evolved. I didn't start out that way. I tried starting out that way, but he wouldn't let me. He kept saying, "Go back to the armbar and basic wrestling stuff." Stuff that I already knew, but he just wanted me to keep going over it so I was sound at it. I'm pretty much sound at just about every part of my wrestling except for interviews and shit like that, which I don't really consider wrestling. If it was my way, I would cut out all interviews.

**Clark:** It was certainly a long road for you to get to where you are. Could you talk in detail about what you had to go through and the things you had to accomplish to finally get to where you are today?

**Sabu:** Before I started wrestling, I would set the chairs up, refereed all the matches, and tore the ring down. Then when I started wrestling in 1986, I did all that stuff, set the ring up, put the chairs up, and then wrestle the first match, referee the rest of the matches, and then tear the ring down. I did that for like two years. I didn't get paid for it. I didn't ask to be paid. He didn't offer it. He probably wanted to see how long I would stick it out and what my attitude would be. I never said to pay me. I never said anything, I just did it.

I still didn't make any money for seven years, when I went to FMW. The most I ever made was probably a hundred bucks a match. Those were rare. When I got a hundred bucks a match, I thought that I was on my way.

**Clark:** Were there ever times you wanted to give up on wrestling and go into something else?

**Sabu:** No, I always say and even before I started I said I would do whatever it took. Even if it meant killing myself. Not killing myself, but doing stuff that nobody else can do. I know the stuff I do I can't do for long. Actually, I think I can. I think I can do it for a long time. The stuff I do I don't think other people could do for long. But I think I can. If I didn't think I could it, I wouldn't be doing it.

**Clark:** How were you managing financially during those years and what point are you at now in terms of making a living in wrestling?

**Sabu:** I had other jobs. I hung dry wall and I painted houses and shit like that. That was pretty depressing. But I never quit lifting weights or never quit training or never quit trying to be something in this business.

**Clark:** How would you describe your mentality or attitude about the wrestling business now compared to the feelings you had through those tough years you went through?

**Sabu:** I still think it sucks. It's great for me right now, but I think it sucks for a lot of other guys. I think it's going to suck a little bit more for the other guys. I think I'm going to be okay now because everybody in the business knows who I am now. That was the main thing I have been trying to do for years that Sheik didn't want me to do. He didn't want nobody to know who I was, I guess because in the beginning he was going to have his territory and I was going to work for him exclusively. That's not all I wanted to do, but working for him was my intention. It just never came about. But he still kind of kept me out of the spotlight for a long time, kept me out of the light, period. I don't know why exactly. I wanted to go to Memphis for years and he wouldn't let me go. He said I wouldn't make any money. I said that I didn't care about the money. I do care about the money, but I didn't. I needed the experience more than I needed money.

I myself have a good attitude towards the business, but I don't have a good attitude towards the guys who don't have to pay their dues. I do hold it against them a little, but it's not totally their fault. If someone hands them something and they don't try to better themselves for what they were handed, then I don't like them and I won't respect them. But there are guys who didn't have to pay their dues but they got an early break, but do try to add to themselves or add to their talent instead of just riding whatever they rode.

**Clark:** Would you trade an early break in this business for all that you had to go through to get where you are, knowing that now?

**Sabu:** No, I think I'm glad I went through it because if I was to fall into another dry spell, I've been there for seven years. I've been there, so it's not such a hard blow. That's why I'm trying to do what I can now. I'm trying to make all my matches good. I can't, but I'm trying to. I'm just trying to ride this wave. I know it's going to die pretty soon or one of these days, hopefully not soon. But I'm just riding a wave right now and trying to keep the wave going.

**Clark:** How has your relationship with the Sheik changed over the years you have been growing and advancing in the wrestling business?

**Sabu:** Almost on his level in his eyes, I think. I'm not on his level as in accomplishments, not by far. But I think I'm on his level where he treats me like a human being now. Before he never used to, he used to treat me like a dog, which is okay. At the time I was pissed off about it, but then I never said nothing and I always did what he told me to do. The other boys would say, "You're uncle doesn't like you, does he?" But, he does. He just wants me to work harder than everybody else and he never handed me or gave me anything that I didn't deserve. He never really ever said, "You had a good match, you did good." He always said all the things I did wrong. A couple trips ago to Japan, he put his hand on my head and said that he was proud of me. I said, "Really?" He said yeah. That made me respect him even more.

**Clark:** How did you get hooked up with Onita and FMW, and what kind of reaction did you have making it to there after all those years of trying to get to that point?

**Sabu:** They wanted Sheik. The Sheik said that I had to come with him. I don't know the exact conversation, I wasn't there, but I know they didn't want to use me and they just didn't know who I was. They didn't believe that I was his nephew, they just thought I was some guy who was going to carry his bags. So they said I could come with him and he said that I had to carry his bags and stuff like that. When I did wrestle for them, they were impressed. They still didn't believe I was his nephew. They figured that if I was Sheik's nephew I would be using a nail and trying to be like him.

When I first started I wanted to be like him, but he changed that and he snapped that right out of my head, which I'm glad he did. In the beginning I wanted it easy and I wanted to get right to the top, I wanted to be "the Sheik's..." But then I was just stupid. Now I'm not so stupid.

**Clark:** What kind of arrangement have you made with yourself regarding working with other promotions in Japan and your current agreement with and your loyalty to Onita?

**Sabu:** Working with anybody else is out of the question unless Onita says it's alright. I've worked with another smaller company, a real small piece of shit company that's working with FMW. I did three shows for them when I was in Japan, which was extra money for me. The last show I just did for them, I was the only guy on the card other than their regulars that don't draw shit. They're all midget guys. I was the biggest guy on the card. These guys are little, tiny Mexican style guys. The most they usually draw is like 500. The night I was there was the biggest they ever had, and it was 3,500 people. It's the biggest house they ever had and they've been running for like three years.

I ran into a little problem with FMW a couple months ago, but then he straightened everything out. I didn't know who could fire me there. I was tired of walking on egg shells so I just said, "Fuck everybody, I'm going to let them know my real attitude about everything, and if they don't like it, they don't like it." I thought I was going to be finished and they're going to fire me. But Onita said not to worry about anything and that he was the only one that could fire me, and that he had no plans to fire me for like ten or fifteen years. I said, "Well, I really don't want to work that long for this company." But he also said each year I would get more money and to just stick with him. So I'm going to. He ruled out working for anybody else unless he says so, and so I have. I was going to work this one shot for WAR and they were going to give me a lot of money to fight Ultimate Dragon. He saw I wanted to leave the company. I did want to leave the company. I was only saying it so they would talk to me. They don't usually talk to me, they only talk to Sheik about me. They don't talk to me about me. I was also getting annoyed about that, so they talk to me now and they said I could do whatever I want to, except I've got to listen to what they say.

**Clark:** How would you describe FMW's style and what it is like to work it on a regular basis?

**Sabu:** It kind of sucks because our Japanese guys are the shits. Onita's got the charisma, and that's all he's got. His wrestling talent is gone. He's only 36-years-old and he wrestles like the Sheik or something. Goto, he's just a bull. The wrestling style sucks. The people like it because they want to see blood and broken tables and chairs. That stuff is alright, it's just that it gets boring. I'm too young to do that style. That's the older guys' style, I think.

Working that style regularly, you get bored with wrestling. It gets stale. Our guys ain't like New Japan guys or All Japan guys, they're the shits. They had bad training. They work out all the time, they're just not any good. When I first went to Japan, I go, "Man, are you guys going to kick my ass? Are you going to show me what it's all about?" I ended up whipping all of them and chasing them around the ring because they're scared of me.

**Clark:** You don't seem too content with the style you are working over there with FMW. Are you?

**Sabu:** No, but I've got to stay with it because he did give me my break. So if he's done with me, then I'll move on. But if he's not, then I'll stay there, not keep my mouth shut, but I'll stay there and bitch.

**Clark:** Do you think this loyalty you have towards Onita is a rare thing in the wrestling business?

**Sabu:** No, I think I want something different out of wrestling than other guys. I want good matches and to push my name higher. Other guys would be content with just having a job. They think a good match is a match where you don't get hurt and it's easy. That's not a good match to me. If you can have a match where you don't get hurt and it's easy and still have a knock-down-drag out match, then that's a good match. But if it's just so easy and you don't get hurt, then that's not good in this business.

**Clark:** When I asked about the rarity in wrestling of the type of loyalty that you have towards Onita, I related it to the fact that most people in this business seem to be loyal to the money and not necessarily to what people have done for them. How do you react to that?

**Sabu:** A lot of guys didn't starve as long as I did. So if someone helped me out, I'll help them back. I got a lecture from somebody else, and they said, "Do you think Onita hired you for a favor?" I said no. They then said, "Then why are you staying with him?" He didn't hire me for a favor, he hired me because of business. So I'm going to stay because of business. I think it's good business to be loyal.

**Clark:** Do you still have great interest these days in working the other styles like the ones New Japan and All Japan employ?

**Sabu:** Yeah, I still fit that in with FMW. I just can't do it when I wrestle the main events or the semi-main events. When I wrestle the young boys I can wrestle like the New Japan style. They don't really want me to, but I do it anyway because I don't like bashing guys all the time. I like having wrestling matches.

**Clark:** What happened with your tryout with WCW last summer?

**Sabu:** It never came about. I called Grizzly Smith and he said I could come to a show in Port Huron, Michigan, and that if somebody didn't show up I could work. Then he said the card was too full. I brought a guy to wrestle and he said to go out before anybody was even in the building. So him and Harley Race came to me and said they were both impressed with me, so they said, and that they would call me back and I could come down to Atlanta for a real tryout in front of Dusty and Ole. They never called me back. About a month went by and I called him again, and he goes, "Dusty and Ole like you but they haven't gotten around to you yet." I said okay. Then that was the last I heard of them until when I went to do the WWF tryout, somebody from the WCW office called me and wanted me to call them back. I never did and I'm not interested in working there anymore.

**Clark:** What kind of an experience did you have at the WWF's television tapings when you were getting a tryout with them and what led you to turn down whatever the offer was that they made you?

**Sabu:** Nothing led me to turn it down. I tried turning it down over the phone, but I'm not rich and I'm not in any place right now so I said I would come anyway. I asked if they were going to pay me for the tryout and they said yeah. I tried telling them over the phone I wasn't interested because I had the Japan thing. After I tried-out, Vince was impressed and he said that he wanted to hire me. He said there weren't any positions open but that they'll make one for me. I asked if he would change my name. He said yeah. So that was one strike down. I asked if he would change my style. He said, "Just a little bit. You don't have to do quite so much." That was another strike. Then I asked if would be able to keep my Japan contract. He said no and that I'd have to wrestle for him exclusively. So that was the third strike.

**Clark:** Are you disappointed from those dealings with WCW and WWF in that you are not working for one of those two major companies in the United States?

**Sabu:** No, I'm not disappointed. I'd be disappointed if I didn't have Japan. If I didn't have Japan I'd be saying, "Fuck, I wish I could work somewhere." But I've got Japan, so anything else doesn't really matter. It just would be nice.

**Clark:** You talked about what Vince said to you regarding adapting and a change in your name and your style to work for them. Do you see maybe down the road that that would be a possibility especially once and if you move on from Japan?

**Sabu:** I don't think I ever want to change my name. I would add something to it if they wanted to, but I want to keep Sabu. I don't want to sell out like everybody does. Plus, right now I have Japan so I don't have to do what they want. I can still have Japan, and they like me the way I am. If someone wants to change me and give me more money and someone wants to give the same money and leave me the way I am, I'm going to stay the way I am. The money isn't that important.

**Clark:** What kind of reflections do you have on both the WCW and the WWF after dealing with them, and has any of your perceptions of them that you might have had changed?

**Sabu:** WCW, I really don't know anything and I didn't go down there. WWF, I was impressed with. I wouldn't mind working there, but it just isn't in the cards right now. I was there for the TV, so of course everything was first class. I've never been around the wrestling part of it like that. I've always been in dingy places that are the shits. When I went there it was like a Cadillac, I couldn't believe it. It was so nice and everybody was cool and business-like. The only thing is, there wasn't any kay fabe. Everybody seemed happy, but I don't think they're so happy now. It just impressed me being around it. I've never been into something that fancy. They treated me good, so that impressed me too. They didn't want me to stand in line like everybody else, they acted like they knew who I was and that they've heard of me. It wasn't like, "Who are you? Sit down. Get up. Come here." It was whatever I wanted.

**Clark:** Do you have any suggestions for the United States' major companies on how they could improve their product?

**Sabu:** I don't know because all I really worry about now is trying to better myself. I'm tired of complaining about how bad things are here. I couldn't honestly tell you what I think because I don't know what I think about how it could improve.

**Clark:** What kind of a future if any do you see yourself having in the U.S. and with whom, and what do you hope to achieve in the States?

**Sabu:** I think it will be okay for me if I keep working hard. Hopefully with Jim Crockett and Paul E. and that WWN thing. But if it takes a while, I was in a hurry, but I'm not in that much of a hurry now. I've been getting a lot of independent dates so I'm working every weekend. So I guess I'm okay right now. I wanted to hurry up, like with the WWF thing, I was kicking myself in the ass for not even considering it. But now I think everything's going to be okay.

**Clark:** What are your thoughts on the direction that Philadelphia's ECW is going in and the job Paul E. Dangerously is doing with it?

**Sabu:** I think he's doing a good job. But I don't know what direction they want to go in, they're only running one town.

**Clark:** Do you like the wrestling style that they are employing there?

**Sabu:** I don't know. I don't want to say it because they'll hear about, but not really. They want to do it like an FMW style with blood and chairs and everything, and give them everything in one fuckin' show. I don't believe in that shit. I'll just do what they want because they're paying me, but my heart ain't totally into it.

**Clark:** How would you compare the Japanese and American styles, and the differences in attitude of the wrestlers working them?

**Sabu:** They treat it more like a sport in Japan still. It's more serious. Here, I don't know, Doink the Clown can be a wrestler. It gets over, but in Japan I don't think that would ever get over. Especially not in All Japan because they're like the serious style like boxing is.

In Japan dressing rooms it's pretty common to see people training. In the States if you see somebody training, they think they're nuts. If you work out in the dressing room in the States, they'll be like, "Get away from me, you're making me tired just looking at you." In Japan it's pretty common. In Japan they just work harder. It's part of their custom to work hard. Our custom is to find a shortcut. That's why the Sheik never wanted me to take shortcuts and I don't want to take shortcuts.

**Clark:** Regarding promoters treatment of their wrestlers and their habits of dealing with the talent, what differences do you see when comparing some of the United States promoters with those in Japan?

**Sabu:** The Japanese promoters treat me a lot better (laughs). ECW treats me good and Dennis Coralluzzo treats me good. Before those guys, promoters treated me like shit. Japan's a lot more professional. Japan's a lot more organized. They spend a lot more on advertising. Around here they say they spend a lot, but I don't think they do, not like Japan. They've got a speaker guy driving around all day long through the town, there's posters, TV, and everything. They do it months ahead of time. So everything's planned better there, as I see with FMW. We draw the people every night, so they're doing something right.

**Clark:** What is your personal opinion regarding steroid use in pro wrestling and how steroids existing in the business has effected you personally, and maybe that steroids has had some effect on your ability to become successful in this business?

**Sabu:** I think if there wasn't any steroids I might have gotten a break sooner. I'm glad about what they're doing now, it's good for me. I feel bad for some guys, you know, like look at Hogan, he looks so small now. But if he was never on juice, it would never have been said that he looks small now. Now you can say he looks small compared to what he was. I used them for three months one time and gained like fifteen pounds. I get into phases of I want to do them and another phase where I don't want to do them. Now I'm totally against them because there's no point in it. Especially if they're going to test you, what's the point?

**Clark:** How do you feel about some of the styles women have been wrestling both in Japan and the United States?

**Sabu:** Japanese women, I think they're killing the business faster than we are. I love all the shit they do, but they do too much in one match. They do all these fuckin' top rope powerbombs and stuff, and then they kick out. I'm a big fan of Japanese women wrestling but I just think some of the stuff they do is just too much. They look like they've never been taught. They've been shown how to throw girls on their heads but they don't know how to work. They can work, but they don't know how. They can't tell a story in a match and have the right formula for a match. But I can't do that much easier. I think Chris Candito's one of the best youngs guys I know that can do that. I'm not really into that. I'm mostly into just the highspots, but I try to make my highspots make sense instead of just fuckin' powerbombing somebody and have them kick out.

**Clark:** Who would you say are some of the workers in the business you have most enjoyed working with over the years?

**Sabu:** Candito. Terry Funk. Mike Awesome. Rob Van Damme. Lightning Kid. I guess I didn't really enjoy working with Onita. I thought it was an honor, but I didn't have a good match.

**Clark:** Could you describe some of the main differences you have experienced in working with American wrestlers versus Japanese guys?

**Sabu:** When I go to Japan it's kind of frustrating because you can't communicate with the guys right. You kind of have to bully them around to get them to do what you want or just fuckin' flip on them and have them move. But here where you communicate, it's so much more relaxed and I have better matches. Kid was the first American guy I wrestled in a long time. I think it went off so good because he could understand everything I said. There was no communication problems. When you say something in Japan, you've got to say it like five or six times and then finally you just fuckin' kick the guy in the teeth. It was refreshing working with an American guy. It was like a breath of fresh air. Sheik was saying, "You've got to get back into the States and work because you're forgetting how to work American style." He was right. I didn't forget, but I was forgetting because I was just doing the Japanese style which doesn't make any sense, it just has to have impact.

**Clark:** Who are some of the people in the business today or someone in particular that you have gained a tremendous amount of respect for or admire for any reason?

**Sabu:** Chris Candito. He's a young guy and he knows the psychology of wrestling. He doesn't take shortcuts, that I know of. Terry Funk for keeping on doing what he's been doing for so long. He still wrestles hard, and he's getting up there.

**Clark:** How would you describe your personality in life and how that compares to the Sabu that we see in the ring?

**Sabu:** I don't know. I'd say I'm pretty boring at home, I don't do shit.

**Clark:** Well, what I meant was, like someone before had seen what you do in the ring and then equated it into "real life" that you might not wear a seatbelt when you're driving and put your head up to the windshield, and then love to crash the car. What I'm trying to ask is, are you much calmer in life outside wrestling?

**Sabu:** (laughs) I'm a calm person but I'm hardcore with whatever I do. I try hard in whatever I do. If I put my heart into it, just like you said, I'd drive without a seatbelt, put my head against the window, and crash it. I just try to do my best at whatever I do. Now there's some times when I don't like what I'm doing, and I don't try my best. I'm the first one to admit it. But if it's something I want to do, like wrestling or other things I like doing, I'll try to crash right through it.

**Clark:** What are the goals that you set out to accomplish when you go out to the ring in front of an audience that has paid to see you perform?

**Sabu:** I do the things that I would want to see if I was a fan, because I'm just so bored with the styles now, American and even Japanese styles. I just try to do things that I would want to see myself. I'd want to see someone do a backflip from the top rope and crash through a table, maybe miss the table, maybe hitting the guy or not hitting the guy. Wrestling sometimes gets to be hum-drum while I'm in there, so to excite me, I'll do a dangerous move. If I don't get hurt, then it's like, "Right on." When I get hurt, it's still, "Right down." It's like a gamble, and if there isn't one, it isn't any fun. Wrestling is a work, it is not a competition. I wish it was a straight competition because then I wouldn't have to do the backflips and stuff, I'd go out there and try to pin the guy, and then get my rocks off by winning. But you can't do that so I get my rocks off by doing the dangerous stuff.

My goal is to give them 100 percent. When I go to a match, I don't say, "I'm going to do this move and that move." I set out a few guidelines and then whatever happens, happens. Most of the stuff and the best stuff I do is on the spur of the moment. I don't really surprise myself because I know what I can do. I don't usually do anything I don't already know that I'm doing, I just don't know what I'm going to do in what order when I go out there.

**Clark:** Do you think it is wrong or does it effect the product to map out a whole match like a movie?

**Sabu:** Yeah, it's wrong, it's real wrong because then you look like you're mapping out a movie, like you said.

**Clark:** Could you roughly describe what physical and mental condition you are in after an average match that you work?

**Sabu:** Mentally, I'm pretty calm. Physically, I'm usually beat up after a match. The last time when I was in Philadelphia I got a hairline fracture in my leg underneath my thigh, so I was limping around. Six days after that I had to go to Japan, so I limped around for a whole week in Japan, then it got better.

**Clark:** Is there any expense, in this case pain and damage to your body, that you wouldn't go through to perform and entertain the people?

**Sabu:** To entertain myself, I'd say. The people are just there to watch. I'm out there entertaining myself, really. I don't harp too much on the pain thing. It just doesn't bother me that much. It hurts, but I try not to feel sorry for myself, and that's why I don't feel sorry for other guys when they get hurt. If they get hurt in my match, I'll say, "Fuck, I'm sorry," or if they break an arm or something, no matter who it is, it's too bad. But I don't say, "Hey, are you okay? Are you okay?" all the time. I don't want to be treated like that so I don't treat other people like that. If some people think I'm cold, then that's too bad. I'm cold to myself so I can be cold to everybody else too.

**Clark:** How do you react to or do you care about what others in the wrestling industry think about your style and what you do in the ring?

**Sabu:** I used to worry about what people thought. The reputation I have in Michigan is that I'm a lawsuit waiting to happen and now those guys don't want to use me. That's okay. I used to care because I used to say, "Okay, I won't do that stuff." But now I don't care. Part of my payment now is breaking a table. If they don't want to let me break a table, then I'm not going to work. In Maryland, that's different. You just couldn't do it there. From now on that's part of my payoff. It's my money and a table. The guys around here were saying, "You can't do that, you're going to get hurt or hurt somebody." Well, then don't use me.

**Clark:** So are you in a position now where you no longer will adjust your style and the type of stuff that you do in the ring?

**Sabu:** Yes, right now what I'm doing is working, and they're not going to change it. If the people hear about me breaking a table and all that, and I don't, they're going to say, "He didn't do it, he doesn't do it anymore, we're not special enough for him to do it." I don't care if there's five people out there, I'll do it if I'm allowed to do it.

**Clark:** Just like Hulk Hogan went out after each match and pleased the people by posing for them, is you breaking a table and that stuff you do you're way of pleasing them and also communicating with the fans?

**Sabu:** Yeah, but originally I did it in Japan for punishment. I got pinned all the time in this one series that was an angle. After the match, Sheik said, "Go back in the ring and do some backflips." I said, "How about if I moonsault a table?" Then he said, "What's that?" I told him to watch. I did it and then afterwards he beat me with an umbrella back to the dressing room. So the people were feeling sorry for me. I still got pinned after that, but after each match I did it and they understood why--I was punishing myself. Now I don't punish myself, I'm just like giving them one more highspot. Like you said about Hulk Hogan, it's like I'm posing in my own way. I'm trying to let the people feel my heart because they're coming there spending their money and I want them to come back. So I want to leave them with one more "something" from me. It sounds a little bit corny because I'm suposed to be a heel, but in Japan I was a babyface and in Philadelphia I'm a babyface.

**Clark:** What expectations do you have for yourself in regards to your future in the wrestling business and what you would like to accomplish and experience in it?

**Sabu:** I'd like to make a lot more money, but that's not totally important. I want to be world champion somewhere, to be the best at one point. I'm not saying to be the best like Ric Flair for the time that he was, but at just one point in my life to be the best.

**Clark:** But because of what some people describe as a crazy style in the ring and a lot of the risky things that you do, do you ever think that your career in wrestling might be cut short and, do you or don't you approach that thought?

**Sabu:** I don't. I don't think it's going to be cut short. I think it might be cut short if somebody else was doing it because they're not me. I'm not saying I'm smarter than anybody else, but I can block things out and I can make myself do things. I can do it. I think it ain't going to damage me as much as people think. I think it might damage somebody else, and they have a different attitude. Like I said, Sheik taught me my attitude. He didn't teach me my attitude, I always had that attitude, but he made my attitude make sense to me. Like in my first two matches when I got hurt, he goes, "Does that hurt?" I said no, and that's it. He taught me that. Nobody cares if you're hurt so why complain about it. It only makes you look bad. Whatever it is, I'm sure it will pass. Like if I happen to get my leg cut off in an accident, I think it would be the best thing for me because I would be the best one-legged wrestler in the world. I would be a true babyface with one leg. I could still dropkick, I could still get up to the top rope, I could do just about everything using the ropes as a crutch. Now a one-armed wrestler might not be so good, but I think a one-legged wrestler would be a great gimmick.

**Clark:** So you would still wrestle if you only had one leg?

**Sabu:** Oh yeah, I know I would. If I get hurt in a car accident I'd be mad, but if I break a leg or even my kneck in the ring, I don't think I'd be that pissed off. I might be disappointed that I can't wrestle anymore, but I wouldn't be pissed off because I hurt it in the ring. That's okay.

**Clark:** Have you thought at all about the possibility of your career ending early or being cut short and then what you would do?

**Sabu:** I don't think it will. I don't think there's any way it really could unless I broke my neck. I want to be in the promoting part of it and the booking part of it, but I'm not in any hurry to do that. Right now I just want to wrestle and be the best wrestler I can be and try to soak in as much education in the wrestling business as I can.

**Clark:** What do you hope your peers and your fans, the people who pay to come see you, would say about you or remember you for?

**Sabu:** That I try hard. I don't want them to think I'm just a loose cannon or a guy out there just flipping around waiting to break his legs, because I am more than that. I don't have to do all that stuff, I'm just doing that stuff because that's what works for me and that's what I would want to see out of somebody.

**Clark:** How big a fan are you of the wrestling business?

**Sabu:** I'm the biggest!

**Clark:** Now I have to ask that question about why you had been lying about your age, sometimes recently saying you're something like 26?

**Sabu:** I did it because I was ashamed it took me so long to make any money in this business. Because I was the Sheik's nephew, everybody said he was going to roll out the red carpet, that I was going to get pushed straight to top, and that it was going to be easy for me. Actually it was harder for me. But now I'm glad it was harder for me.

**Clark:** In an earlier conversation, you talked about making some changes regarding exposing yourself to the public in a different light? Could you explain what we had discussed?

**Sabu:** I'm not going to do any more interviews like this and I ain't going to sign photos or go to conventions and talk to the people anymore. Sheik was always a believer in his gimmick. He never did interviews, never did them. I'm only doing this because I'm trying to push myself, like if anybody hears of me it's better, or even what little they hear of me is okay and good for me. I just don't want to tell the truth anymore, I guess (laughs), because people don't want to hear the truth, they want to hear a made-up story, and I don't want to give it to them, so I'd rather not say anything.

**Clark:** Do you think it's appropriate for someone's "sanity" to leave the gimmick in the ring and to not carry that gimmick around with them in their lives, or do you think the business should change to where the wrestlers should do that?

**Sabu:** I think it should be changed. I think they should work it a little more. I'm not saying 24 hours, Sheik isn't Sheik 24 hours. It's hard to do and I guess you don't want to do it, but it's better for the business because the people will keep wondering about you. If they already know about you, then I don't think they're going to come see you, because their questions will be answered. But if they're still wondering, they'll still going to come to see you if they can figure you out. But if they already know what you're thinking, then I don't think they'll be excited to see you.

**Clark:** What do you do and enjoy doing outside of the wrestling business such as when you go home to Michigan?

**Sabu:** When I'm home I'm basically just taking care of my mother. I also train. I have my own weights in my basement, that's like my own gym. I have my own ring at this warehouse, which is my other gym, and I have a trampoline and all other kinds of stuff there. I have my mom here and my dog, and that's it. I just take of my mom because she ain't in the best health anymore, and she took care of me for all these years, so now it's my turn. Really, I have almost no social life. My only hobbies is probably my Nintendo and my VCRs, because I watch tapes. Other than that, there's nothing but wrestling. There's chicks around here that always say, "Why don't you get more serious with us?" I'm too serious with my mom and wrestling. I don't want anything else to come in between. Maybe when I get rich, then I'll get a wife or something, but right now I'm pretty content with what I'm doing. To some it's very boring, but to me it ain't. I love wrestling and I love my mom, so there's nothing else.

# MISSY HYATT

The following interview with Melissa Anne Hiatt was conducted via telephone on April 11 from her new apartment in New York City of which she just recently moved into after residing in Atlanta, GA during her five years of employment with World Championship Wrestling. She was fired from her $75,000-a-year job in February by Eric Bischoff and just recently filed a claim with the EEOC in Atlanta against WCW.

**John Clark:** First of all, how are you doing and what are the things you're now getting involved in since you moved to New York?

**Missy Hiatt:** I am going to acting classes and I am going on auditions. I've auditioned for *Days of our Lives*, I did one for *Another World*, and I got a call-back for a Budweiser commercial. So who knows?

**Clark:** Do you see any future for yourself in the wrestling business at this point, or else what do you see yourself doing as a career?

**Hiatt:** I really want to act, that's my main thing. If there is something that comes up in wrestling, like I'll be working with WWN, Paul E. and Jim Crockett's organization, if there's any independent stuff, if people want to call and they can meet my price, then I'll go work for them. But to be honest with you, wrestling's just extra stuff. I mean it's not what I want to do.

**Clark:** How would you describe your five years working for World Championship Wrestling and what that experience meant to you?

**Hiatt:** The money was the only thing, even though I was paid so much less than all the other men. The money was very nice. But after working there, it wasn't very fun and it wasn't very fulfilling. It's like, I would rather make less money and do something that I enjoy than work somewhere for more money. It just took me a while to realize that.

**Clark:** What was your actual job description over those five years?

**Hiatt:** I was a manager, then I was an announcer. I don't know, I never really had a job description. It was just whenever there was something stupid to do, "then let's Missy do it."

**Clark:** Were there times where they wouldn't use you for long periods of time, even though they had you under contract?

**Hiatt:** Yeah, a couple of different times before I worked with the Nasty Boys there was about three months that I really didn't do much. A few years before that, before I became an announcer, because they really didn't know what to do with me, I didn't work very much for a couple of months. They put me into voice school to try to get rid of my southern accent. That was Mr. Herd's idea.

**Clark:** Did your opinions and feelings towards the company change much over those five years?

**Hiatt:** Yes, definitely, because we went through so many different bosses. Each boss that came in, he had his different clique and different people that he wanted to hire. I went through so many changes and so many different people there that each time a new person came along we always knew that something was going to happen.

**Clark:** What was the situation around them firing you right before your contract expired and how did that effect the plans you had for your career in the wrestling business?

**Hiatt:** I was fired because I went over my supervisor's head and he found out about it. I went over his head about the picture (a blown-up photo taken by a WCW employee at Starrcade '93 where her breast fell out of her outfit as she came into the ring) that was hanging on the CNN wall. He found out about it, and he was drunk, and he fired me after he said a lot of sexual stuff to me. It effected me a lot. It changed my whole life drastically because I was told in December I was getting renewed. I had plans. I had just bought a new car and I had plans to stay in Atlanta, Georgia. So I guess it was a blessing in disguise.

**Clark:** Has WCW fairly settled monetary matters with you?

**Hiatt:** No, not at all. They still owe me for my 900-line and for my calendar. They've never paid me one penny for my comic book and my trading cards in the five years I was there. They thought because I was a woman that I would just forget about it and never question anything. I'm sure Sting every three months got his money and I'm sure all the other wrestlers got their money on time. But I never did get a check like I was supposed to. I was on their Sega games and Nintendo games, the video games. I recorded my voice for that and I've never gotten one penny for any of that. They still have yet to pay me. They promised to pay me in February. And this is what, April?

**Clark:** Could you state the exact charges you filed against WCW on March 29 with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission?

**Hiatt:** I filed for sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, and equal pay. They discriminated against me but they paid me less and they didn't treat me like a man. They didn't give me the same opportunities they gave the other male announcers or even the male managers.

**Clark:** What made you decide to file this and bring this up now?

**Hiatt:** It came because of the picture, the picture hanging on the wall on the CNN studios. That was the last straw. I went home and I cried and I stayed in bed for like three days, and it just depressed me. It wasn't until after my friends, after seeing the years of destruction that I was doing to my body, being bulimic, them calling the attention to me and my family talking to me about it, saying, "This is not right, you're unhappy." People do a lot of things sometimes and they're just going through the motions in life, and they don't realize just how severely depressed they are.

**Clark:** You starting talking about how this has effected you. Just how much of an effect has all of this had on you emotionally?

**Hiatt:** A big effect, and my psychiatrist knows. I was on a lot of medication for the last year and a half working at WCW to help with the depression. After I got fired and I slept and wouldn't get out of my house for like two weeks, after I got back from Orlando, finally my doctor got me off some of the medication, and I have felt a lot better than I have in a long time, in maybe four years. I feel a whole lot better emotionally and physically because I know I'm not trying to meet their standards.

**Clark:** Could you give me some idea of the atmosphere you personally had to work in at WCW?

**Hiatt:** The atmosphere was being treated like an idiot. If I would ever go to any kind of supervisor or anybody on the booking committee with an idea that I would have, they would look at me and go, "Ah, that's so cute. Did you think of that yourself?" And they treated me like I was so stupid. They treated me like I had not one brain in my head. I have nine years experience in wrestling and I'm not a dumb blond. They treated me as my character on TV.

**Clark:** Did you let them get away with it for a long time or was it something you just figured you couldn't do anything about?

**Hiatt:** What can I do? I speak up my mind but you can only speak up so much in wrestling before they think you're a troublemaker. And I was always told by my ex, Eddie Gilbert, you always smile, you always say thank you, and you never let them see it bothers you because if they see that it bothers you then they're going to do it even more. When they had Madusa and I do the bikini contest they loved having the two ex-Gilberts work a program together. They all sat around and they wanted something to happen. They thought it was so cool, "Ooh, what an inside thing! The new ex-Mrs. Gilbert and the ex-Mrs. Gilbert." The little things that they did, I would always just try to smile and not let it worry me. It built up over the years to a time that I just totally broke down.

**Clark:** Were those bad working conditions at WCW for you similar for the other women that were employed there?

**Hiatt:** All of them. Even the ones that are married now to the wrestlers that are in the business, they were still treated like crap. All the women have been treated like third-rate kind of citizens there because it's all run by men.

**Clark:** Do you think this treatment of women is a major problem in our country or basically moreso just a problem within WCW?

**Hiatt:** No, I just think it's that southern male mentality and it's just the professional wrestling business. Because there's a lot of women vice presidents, there's a lot of stock brokers, there's a lot of women lawyers, and there's a lot of women running companies nowadays. I just can't believe that Jane Fonda, who did so great for herself with her fitness videos and being a woman of herself and never having a man do anything for her, would marry some guy like Ted Turner. Because I used to respect her, and I thought, what a woman she is, what a woman of the 90s she is. She's completely what I didn't think she was all about.

**Clark:** As far as the claim you filed with the EEOC and the possible lawsuit that would come out of it, are you mainly looking for money out of it or are you desiring for WCW to make changes because of this?

**Hiatt:** Both. I'm doing this for all the women that they treated like crap and I'm looking for my money. I want my back pay and I want my equal pay because reinstatement is not, not acceptable. I want back pay, I want my front pay, and I want interest on the back pay that they owe me. I think they're starting to get charged about twelve percent right now because they haven't been paying me my money that they owe me.

**Clark:** What do you think of the possibility that people out there might not take your claim seriously or discard what you're saying because of the reputation you have because of the nature of the character that you have portrayed in wrestling?

**Hiatt:** They might not because all I know is I couldn't even go to a sporting event, like I love professional hockey, and I would go to a hockey game in Atlanta and I'd have people yell at me, "Yo, Missy, ooh, take it off!" The way the fans perceive me, because they see me on TV, they have treated me like I'm dumb and I'm a bimbo. And the people at work, even the production crew members and other wrestlers, it's the same perception. Maybe I do my character so well that they perceive me as being that. But I don't think they think of Sting as going around his house doing the whoo and the Stinger splash everywhere.

**Clark:** Has there been anyone at WCW who you felt treated you with some amount of respect?

**Hiatt:** Kip Frey. Dusty Rhodes treated me very nice. If they would have let Dusty do what Dusty wanted to do... He always tried to put me on TV and stuff, but Dusty was always fighting, "Let's put Missy on the pay-per-view." He's always had other people fighting him against that.

**Clark:** Could you specifically describe some of the situations in which you say you were a victim of sexual harassment?

**Hiatt:** Definitely. I was grabbed many times in the hallways to the dressing rooms. I was talked demeaning to by a lot of supervisors. I was told a couple of times, one time in particular that I can remember, "God damn it, can't you get the interview right? You sound like Ellie Mae. Fuckin clamp it." And I was called dumb a lot in front of all the production people. I was grabbed and touched by a supervisor and he would try to push his way into my dressing room, and in front of the wrestlers go, "Excuse me, guys, I've got to go in there and talk to Missy." And he'd walk in my room and shut the door and then keep trying to ask me out, and say, "Why don't you try an older man?"

**Clark:** Are you able to name these supervisors involved with this?

**Hiatt:** No, not now. With the filing of the EEOC, that is all confidential until the EEOC sends my attorney the right to sue letter, then that will all be public knowledge.

**Clark:** How would you deal with these types of situations?

**Hiatt:** I would just kind of try to laugh it off and push him out the door. Everytime I would walk by and wrestlers would say nasty stuff to me like "Ooh, baby, ooh, baby, come here" and all other rude, obnoxious things, I would just not even think about it. I would put it out of my mind and just walk through there with my head down and go where I'm going. But it was so degrading. It just took a toll on me. When I married (to Eddie Gilbert), I didn't have that problem because people respected Eddie and they wouldn't do it. Then when I was dating Mike, Road Warrior Hawk, last year, it's the only time I ever got respect from any of the wrestlers because they knew he'd kill them. He told the Nasty Boys and he told some other ones, "You better be nice to her and you better respect her or you're going to have to deal with me." Because Mike has a reputation in this business of being a very strong guy, probably the strongest.

**Clark:** Were there ever times where you were physically harmed?

**Hiatt:** Oh, definitely. Even one time on the Clash of the Champions from Wichita, they didn't tell me beforehand they were going to throw me in the water trough, and they did. They had Abdullah the Butcher pick me up and throw me in there. On TV having to do the in-locker room interviews, having Stan Hansen spank me. Just the stuff on TV is degrading enough but then they did it too off-camera.

**Clark:** How did this effect you psychologically and were there times you would just break down and cry or anything like that?

**Hiatt:** Oh, all the time. I'd come home sometimes and be driving back from a town and just cry, a lot of times. I'm sure my doctor knows more about it than I do because I've talked to him more.

**Clark:** Was there anyone in the company who you could go to and talk about these things with?

**Hiatt:** Janie's (Engle) the one. I showed her the picture after I took it off the wall. I just kind of went and cried. We had to do new promo pictures that day. It was like a few days later and I had it in my purse, and I showed it to Janie, she's Dusty's assistant up there. I showed it to her, and I said, "Janie, can you believe this? It's so disgusting." She said, "Well, go to Eric. Show this to Eric and make him take care of it." I'm saying, "Oh, they're not going to do anything and they'll just laugh at me." Which they did. But I went to Eric anyway, and I guess I should have kept my mouth shut some more. Nothing would've happened if I wouldn't have ever went to Eric and stood up for myself. But at the end I started standing up for myself. My doctor told me, "You know, the only way you're going to get better is if you start standing up for yourself and not let these people treat you that way." And then when you start standing up for yourself and start acting like you do have a brain and start asking questions, then you get the reputation of being difficult and they fire you.

**Clark:** During those times when you were being treated that way, how did you deal with those feelings of hurt you had and trying to respect yourself when others weren't?

**Hiatt:** I would feel bad a lot about myself. If it wasn't for my two best girlfriends that would tell me, "Missy, don't worry about it, don't think that way," I don't know how I could have dealt with it.

**Clark:** How do you personally feel about Eric Bischoff and the manner in which he treated you as an employee of his?

**Hiatt:** I personally think Eric Bischoff is very unqualified. He lied on his resume to get his job. He doesn't tell the truth about anything. When I've gone to talk to him he's outright lied to me. As a person, I don't think he's much of a person either. I introduced my ex-boyfriend, Jason Hervey, to him to try to help him get his show *The Kids Team Challenge* off. When Jason and I broke up this past summer, Jason sent my personal belongings to Eric's house. Eric wouldn't even let me look at my stuff that was in his garage until I signed the three cars and the motorcycle over to Jason. I think that's called extortion. That was my supervisor at the time withholding my personal belongings. Now, I should have gone over there with the police and I should have contacted an attorney, but I didn't because I just wanted it over with. I had gone through a long enough fight with Jason to get my dog back, let alone some of my personal belongings and jewelry and things that my mother had given me. It was worth just to go ahead and sign it to get it over with. But I don't think when you're a supervisor at Turner that that's one of your duties. I just coldn't go over there with two big guys to beat him up to get my stuff. You just can't do that because that's your boss. So I had to sign it. I couldn't even go over there with an attorney or the police, in reality, or I would have probably been fired then. Maybe not that day, a week later, for something trivial.

**Clark:** What opinions do you have of Bill Watts, Jim Ross, and Ole Anderson in regards to their treatment of you and women in general?

**Hiatt:** They think wrestling's back in the 60s and they think women are categorized as midgets and stuff. They call the women up there "skirts." They think that we're just extra and don't really draw anything. They don't think women have any brains.

**Clark:** Do you think that these types of attitudes toward women could ever change there at WCW?

**Hiatt:** Maybe now because of all of this. Hopefully there will be a woman in some kind of capability up there other than a secretary. But I doubt that will ever happen. It's amazing, Linda McMahon can run the World Wrestling Federation, which is by far years ahead of WCW, and she is an attorney, she's the president of Titan. She can do that, but they (WCW) won't even allow or have a woman make decisions down there.

**Clark:** From your personal experience at WCW, what is your depiction of the steroid use currently in that company?

**Hiatt:** I'm sure there is. Different bosses have had different policies. Some have said, "If you get off of them, we'll give you extra money." Some of them don't even care. If the FBI would go back and ask for the records for the last five years of their testing, they couldn't show nothing because it doesn't matter, I mean if you're a big star and you tested positive, they don't care. Everybody's jumping on poor Vince McMahon, he's admitted to using them back when they were still legal. The only reason why the FBI was after him is because they wanted to try to seize Titan Towers and get the nine million dollars that Titan Towers is worth. If I was the FBI, I think I would go for the CNN Center. I think it's worth a little bit more than nine million. They didn't even have a real testing program going on. It was just whenever, maybe once a year, if that, and then you could walk out and still have a job. And there's been wrestlers down there that's been documented, I'm not going to say any names, but got arrested for steroids in their hotel room and WCW paid and bailed them out. And they're still working there.

**Clark:** Do you think your time at WCW has helped you or hurt you as far as enhancing your career in wrestling?

**Hiatt:** In wrestling it might have helped me for the exposure on TV. But to be honest with you, I've been offered money from different wrestling places, and the only reason why I worked for Paul (Heyman of WWN) is I did it as a favor, but it's going to take a lot of money and a daily guarantee to make me even want to go and be in that atmosphere. I loved going to the ring and I loved being a manager and I loved hosting the show, but all the politics and all the crap that you have to endure until you get there, it's just not worth it. There's no amount of money in the world that's worth me to go through crap like that and be treated like that.

**Clark:** Do you think your experience at WCW and what you've done there has helped you advance towards other forms of entertainment that you're interested in doing?

**Hiatt:** No, not at all, because I really wanted to be a real sports announcer and I begged them and tried, and they sent me to voice school to make me a real announcer and a real interviewer, but that ended up with me doing those stupid, goofy in-locker room interviews. I tried to go over to TNT Sports when they wanted to hire a girl to interview football players for the Sunday Night TNT, and they wouldn't even interview me. They laughed at me because I was in wrestling and no one would take me seriously--"How hard can it be to interview a wrestler that's spitting and doing stupid stuff, to interview a man that at least has a couple of brain cells?" It doesn't take much for me to read up and find out a little bit about the person that I'm going to interview and the few questions that I have to ask them.

**Clark:** You had a very, very brief stint with the WWF in 1987. Do you think you would be at a different position in your career if you would have stayed with Titan Sports?

**Hiatt:** Oh, definitely. If I would have stayed in the WWF, right now it would be Missy Hyatt movies instead of Hulk Hogan movies and I'd have my own series. It would be *Thunder in Paradise* starring Missy Hyatt, or Missy Hyatt *and* Hulk Hogan, he'd be second billing though.

**Clark:** That's strange though because you would think you would have had a better chance of doing those things through working for Turner.

**Hiatt:** The wrestling department is treated like a red headed step child. They don't even give coverage to it, but just recently Larry King finally had Ric Flair on there. They're not even treated as part of the company. They're the best kept secret. When Turner goes to the big conventions to sell the shows, it's like, "Oh, yeah, *and* wrestling."

**Clark:** Do you have any major regrets or things you would have done differently in your wrestling career?

**Hiatt:** If I would have known what I know now, I think I would have started standing up for myself a lot longer ago, but I wouldn't be working in wrestling right now if I would have done that. Working with the Nasty Boys, I really didn't want to do that. But I had no choice. I wanted to work with the Hollywood Blonds. I think that would have made a much better team instead of me being with the Nasty Boys. That's completely out of Missy's character, but they made it and had me go out there and scream and act stupid.

**Clark:** What were some of the more enjoyable and also unenjoyable moments in your career in pro wrestling?

**Hiatt:** Enjoyment time was UWF. Enjoyment was World Class when I started because I was so naive and new to the business and I thought it was so different and exciting. Working Memphis was fun, doing live TV every Saturday was fun. That's about it. I really can't think of much. Doing my calendar, taking the pictures for my calendar and putting the calendar together, that was fun. They won't even give me any (calendars). They gave me thirty and I've tried to get some more. That was enough for family and stuff, but I only have one left and they won't give me any. Besides the profits they won't even give me a few for me to have. Another enjoyable time was when I was doing the Missy Hyatt segment on the Saturday morning show, that was fun. Not enjoyable times, just about any other time that I had there.

**Clark:** How would you compare your character to other women in the wrestling business as far as performance and drawing ability, i.e. Madusa Miceli, Sherri Martel, Elizabeth, Woman, or any others?

**Hiatt:** Madusa can't do an interview, she's a great wrestler. I wanted to be her manager. I went to them with the idea of letting me be her manager, but then they would have to fly in girls to wrestle her and I guess they were too cheap to do that. I thought it would be so cool to have me be her manager because she can't talk, and get her over because she's an absolute fantastic wrestler. I'm totally different. Sherri Martel, she's another wrestler. She can take bumps in the ring. She's totally different than me. Elizabeth has never talked. She just walked out there and looked gorgeous. She was just beautiful, she was there to add beauty. I know I've lasted longer than any other woman in this business, not wrestling. Sting, Ron Simmons, and Missy Hyatt were the only people that were there (WCW) from the beginning. They never really used me to the extent that they could have used me to.

**Clark:** Well, how different is the Missy Hiatt that I'm speaking to right now compared to the Missy Hyatt that people have seen in front of WCW cameras?

**Hiatt:** That I have a high I.Q. and that I'm a person and that I'm not stupid and that I have feelings. Because the Missy that you see on TV is like "the light's on but no one's home." I'm very far from that. A lot of people wouldn't know that I read a lot, I mean extremely a lot. One thing was very funny right before I got fired. I was in the dressing room reading Walt Whitman and one of the supervisors came in and was like, (sarcastically) "Oh, you're reading that?" I'm like, "Yeah, is there a problem?" He said, "Well, isn't that kind of...?" I'm like, "What are you trying to stay, I watch public access channel?" But I read a lot and I read a lot of different things because I like to learn. I was going to be an attorney. I went to college to be an attorney but I didn't finish college. When I was living with Jason, he wanted me to quit wrestling and go back to school to be an attorney. I have a paralegal degree, which I got when I lived in L.A. I'll read anything that's interesting that I can pick up and find at the bookstore.

**Clark:** Would you say that while working for WCW you grew at all as a person or learned things?

**Hiatt:** I didn't learn anything from them. Anything that I learned was because of me going out of my own way and doing it. The only thing I learned at TBS is that if you lie on your resume you can get a job as an executive producer.

**Clark:** What are some of the common misconceptions that people might have about you that you would like to say?

**Hiatt:** That I'm a bimbo and they think that I'll go out with any guy there is. That's totally wrong. They made me out to be "Miss Slut U.S.A.," and that's not how I am at all. And the fans and the way people have treated me when I was away from the wrestling ring: I mean we'd be sitting there at a hockey game and people that I don't even know would come up and sit down and start trying to ask me out, "Oh, you're Missy Hyatt..," and then they'd get angry when I wouldn't want to talk to them. I'd be out at a club with my girlfriends and people would walk right up to me and start talking to me and get right in my face. They think that I'm that character, and I'm not.

**Clark:** How would you describe yourself when it comes to dating?

**Hiatt:** I would never want to date a guy that ever watched me on wrestling. That's the first thing. If they know who I am, I will not go out with them. That's the only reason I went out with Rod Brind'Amour of the Flyers. He didn't watch wrestling, but two of his friends that introduced us did. But he had never seen me on TV. That's the only reason why I said, "Yeah, I'll go out with you." The only reason I went out with Mike (Hawk) is because I knew him for like ten years and he knew that that's not the way I was, he knew that was my character. When he came back to work for WCW I would have never thought in a million years that I'd start going out with him, but he was the only person in nine years to ever say that he really respected me and respected what I had done. I was giving him a ride because the Nasty Boys got drunk at a bar and I wanted to get out of there, and they kicked my new car--I had just bought a Ferrari--and so Mike kind of saved me from them because we had known each other for a long time. Then we got in the car and I was giving him a ride back to the hotel, and he was like, "You know, Missy, I just really wanted to tell you that I respect you and respect what you've done in this business because it's been hard for a woman, and what you do on TV and what you do is really cool." From then on I looked at him in such a totally different light, because no one has ever said that to me. That's why I fell in love with him.

**Clark:** How would you describe yourself as a person? I mean, do you have a lot of insecurities in your life?

**Hiatt:** Oh, everyday. Everyday I don't know if I'm going to be able to make it in acting. I mean, I'm changing careers at thirty years old. It's going to be really hard. It's going to be real hard. But I'm going to acting class and I'm going to learn. I think I take direction pretty good.

**Clark:** Are you at this point attempting to leave the Missy Hyatt character behind and put it to its death?

**Hiatt:** Definitely, I want to be taken as a serious actress. That's why I'm going to the Strausborg Actor's Studio.

**Clark:** Are you content with being single at this point in your life or is there marriage and possibly children in your future?

**Hiatt:** I'd love that if I could find the right person. If I could find the right person, that would be great, especially when my mother keeps telling me, "Am I ever going to hold a grandbaby?" I don't know. It's like I have my little dog, Sasha girl, I said, "Mom, that's about as close as you're going to get right now."

**Clark:** What have you achieved doing the the bimbo-type gimmick?

**Hiatt:** Money. It supported me. It supported my family, and that's the one thing that I can't do anymore. My nephew, who's like my little brother, I could buy him a jeep for his birthday and pay his insurance and I could give him money for voice lessons and put him through college. Now, it's like, "Lee, I can't help you as much as I used to." I was the sponsor of a hockey team for kids that couldn't afford it. Now I can't do that. When the coach of the hockey team found out I got fired, he was like, "Oh, I'll have to go tell the boys you can't sponsor them anymore." But it was at the end of the season anyway. I said, "Well, maybe by next year I'll have the money," because sponsoring a hockey team with the equipment and the jerseys, everything's really expensive. I didn't grow up with everything, so at least if I could give back to some of the kids, that was great. And to give to my nephew and my family. I bought land in the mountains and I have been wanting my parents to sell their house and move to the mountains and retire. My father retired from his job but he's still working, and I don't like that. This country and the way the system works here with social security and Medicaid is very wrong.

**Clark:** You seem to be very close to your parents.

**Hiatt:** Very close. My parents have been married forty-seven years.

**Clark:** Boy, that's unusual today in this country.

**Hiatt:** It's very unusual. They still love each other. My dad still chases my mom around the house and they still say I love you. My mom still bonks him on the head. They get along like children. They get along like they were newlyweds.

**Clark:** Are you satisfied or content with what you have done in the wrestling business?

**Hiatt:** No, I was never used to my full potential. Hopefully this WWN thing with Jim Crockett and Paul E. will go good and they'll be able to use me and use my mind and use my creativity and use the Missy character and change it into something that can be used to its full extent.

**Clark:** Does it upset you that you may not have achieved respect from the public or your peers with the character you portrayed in wrestling?

**Hiatt:** Yeah, it does. Definitely.

**Clark:** What image do you think you have with the public?

**Hiatt:** I just have that reputation, "Oh, that's that blond bimbo on wrestling. That's the wrestling chick." When it comes to wrestling, there's so many people out there that think it's really real, and I hate to insult people's intelligence. I know they come up to Susan Lucci sometimes and they get mad at her, and go, "You're that evil Erica Cain," but they know that soap operas aren't real. But they have to realize that the same thing implies to wrestling. A lot of people out there don't realize that.

**Clark:** How come your personal life or maybe your sex life seems to be a popular subject of conversation in the business?

**Hiatt:** I don't know. When I did the Vicki Lawrence show, she didn't ask any of the other wrestlers who they had dated or who they had gone out with. I guess because I just have that look of "they want to know who I'm going out with." Everyone wants to know. It's like, "Who is she dating or who do you think she should be?" I remember when I met Rod, they gave me his hockey stick and so I asked him to sign it. He was like, "I wouldn't have even talked to you because I would have thought either you could do better than me or you already have someone." And I'm thinking, "A lot of people think that, that's why I guess I don't have dates."

**Clark:** How tough has it been to maintain your physical lool and what kind of things have you chose to put your body through to maintain that physical appearance that you possess?

**Hiatt:** I was bulimic for two years because I was always told I was fat. "You're fat, you're fat, you're not skinny enough, you're not skinny enough." I went through the stages of being bulimic. I could never be anorexic because I always had to stick something in my mouth. Then I'd feel so ashamed about myself that I ate so I'd go and make myself throw up. There was times that I would throw up five times a day for my appearance. I spent five thousand dollars to have my teeth done. There was nothing wrong with my teeth before, but I thought, "Oh, anything I could do to make myself look better on TV." My left eye was a little saggy, they call it a lazy eye. I went and had that fixed. No one could tell it but me, but I was so critical of myself and how I looked that I did that. I was working out two, two and a half hours a day, and that's just too much. My trainer tells me that I abused my body. I have messed up knees now from doing so much aerobics and pounding and stuff. I'm not even supposed to ski.

**Clark:** Did you feel pressured from anyone to do these things?

**Hiatt:** It was just the way they treated me. "You're fat, you're fat."

**Clark:** If another woman said that you were degrading women with the Missy Hyatt character, how would you react to that statement?

**Hiatt:** That I'm just doing my job.

**Clark:** Are there any women in the public eye that you admire or that you've tried to emulate in your life at all?

**Hiatt:** I tried to make Missy's character a combination of Marilyn Monroe, Erica Caine, Jane Mansfield--the comedy kind of stuff. But I used to respect Jane Fonda. I don't really anymore. Oprah Winfrey maybe, because she has her own production company and she did everything on her own. She's been battling her weight problem and I feel really sorry about that because I saw a show not too long ago and it made me really upset. She was talking about the way the press has really gotten onto her about her weight problem. They don't understand there is a person inside of you. First you're judged by your physical experience. It's really ashame, I read this somewhere, when a woman gets up and stands to speak in front of a crowd, first they look, and if they like what they see, then they listen. But if a man gets up to speak, if what he's got to say is interesting, then they'll listen.

**Clark:** Going back in time here, how exactly did you break into the business in 1985?

**Hiatt:** I was dating John Tatum at the time. Rick Hazard and David Manning saw me at the matches with John and asked me if I wanted to be a manager. I was like, "Oh, okay, sure. What do I have to do?" They said, "Go out to the ringside with him." I was like, "Okay, I can do that. Do I get paid?" They said yeah. I still have my first pay check. I've never cashed it. I doubt I could cash it now, but I still have my $50 first pay check.

**Clark:** Were you a fan of the business before that?

**Hiatt:** Not really, kind of, but not really. I was going out with John and I had a girlfriend who was a fan and I knew some people in wrestling. That's how I met him, through my girlfriend.

**Clark:** Could you give a little background on what you were doing before wrestling entered your life?

**Hiatt:** I went to high school in Tallahassee and then I moved to Atlanta because I started modeling, and then I met John. I'm only thirty, and I've been doing it for nine years, and I met John when I was like twenty because we were together a while before I got into wrestling.

**Clark:** What is it about pro wrestling that attracted you to it?

**Hiatt:** It was totally different. I never watched it growing up and for the first few years I was in it, my parents didn't like it, they thought it was horrible. Until I got on TBS and their friends saw me on TV, people would say, "What is Missy doing?" "Oh, she's living out in Texas," you know, they would not want to tell anyone what I was doing because they thought it was low class. And then when their friends saw me on TBS they finally went, "Oh, yeah, that's her," and then they found out it wasn't so bad. But I never watched wrestling growing up, I had no idea about wrestling growing up.

**Clark:** What have you learned from the wrestling business?

**Hiatt:** Don't trust anyone and don't lie.

**Clark:** What kind of experience was it for you and what did you learn from being married to Eddie Gilbert?

**Hiatt:** I just learned the politics thing, you know, to keep your mouth shut. It's so hard to explain because I can't really think off the top of my head exactly what I learned. I just learned a lot of the politics that go along with wrestling and that they lie.

**Clark:** You being new to the business when you started out, was there anyone there who helped you with interviews and other aspects of the wrestling business?

**Hiatt:** No, never. How I got my first start doing interviews was when I first started working with John. We went to interviews the first day because John really didn't do interviews before him and I started working together, he was just like a low-card heel. He went to talk and they said he sounded funny, so they said, "Missy, thirty seconds, Lubbock, Texas, you and John versus Sunshine and Scott Casey, three-two-one, go." That's how I got my start in interviews. They said to just complain and whine.

**Clark:** How has your attitude towards the wrestling business changed now that you've been in it for close to nine years?

**Hiatt:** Well, I really didn't know anything about the business when I first started and I would walk in the dressing room or walk inside and they would go, "Kay Fabe," and I would go, "No, my name's not Kay Fabe, it's Missy." I was totally a fan or just not smart to what goes on in wrestling. I just did what they told me at the beginning. When I met Eddie Gilbert and he was a booker, then I finally realized what was going on and the politics of wrestling. He really taught me a lot. If it wouldn't have been for him, I wouldn't have lasted so long, I wouldn't have learned how to keep my mouth shut. I don't know if that's bad or good, I guess it's good for family. Like my mom said, "Now you're meant to do something that you were always meant to do, that's act. You should have been doing that a long time ago." Maybe if I would have done that, went from modeling to acting, a different career, I'd be making a whole lot more money now and already have an Academy Award or an Emmy.

# RODDY PIPER

The following interview with Roddy Piper (Roderick George Toombs), 43, who worked his last foreseeable wrestling match at the WWF's King of the Ring PPV and is now concentrating on a movie career, was conducted by John Clark via telephone from his home up on a mountain in Hillsboro, Oregon on July 7, 1994.

**John Clark:** Where exactly were you born and raised?

**Roddy Piper:** I was actually born in a town called Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, but I couldn't tell you nothing about it because I was shipped off and soon I was able to travel to a place called Glasgow, Scotland. I was raised there in a place called the Garbles for about five years, and I started playing the pipes there. And then from there I went to Australia, from Australia to England, from England to Canada, and then I ran away from home, and I was out of there. That was it, so I really don't have a place that I'm from.

**Clark:** Who were some of the people early in your life that influenced you as a human being?

**Piper:** I was living in a youth hostel and there was a guy in the police athletic league I was wrestling in. I was a 167 amateur wrestling champion at the time. I was fifteen in a youth hostel. And this guy was a cop, a detective, a good wrestling coach, and he was also a professional referee for professional wrestling matches. I had never seen one (wrestling match). But with the youth hostels, you could only stay one night, then you're out and you can't come back. So he offered me $25 to fight this guy, and that's how I got my first professional wrestling match.

I had never seen one. And that night they snuck me over the border and on I went.

**Clark:** What kind of an influence did your parents have on you and if you had any brothers or sisters, how did they influence you?

**Piper:** I never talk about my family. I ran away when I was thirteen and I formed my own family, and I've got them now.

**Clark:** How do you look back on your life as a kid growing up?

**Piper:** From what I can remember, my life started pretty much at thirteen, fifteen. I started wrestling at fifteen. And I've just got around 6,000 pro matches, maybe more, I'm not real sure. Just pro, I don't know how many amateurs and how many times on the street and in bars with Muroco. And Orton always used to get drunk, and every time he got drunk, he goes, "You stupid cunt." That's the only word he knew.

When I was thirteen, fifteen, I kind of pick my life up from there. At thirteen I just hustled the streets, which teaches you a whole new way of life, if you can keep some kind of a morality code. From there, once I got that break to wrestle, the match lasted just ten seconds. It was the shortest match in the history of the place. I was a 167 amateur wrestling champion and fifteen years old. My whole pipe band played me to the ring because they were so proud of me. The guy was 320 pounds, he had no neck at all, hair every place and mostly inside his ears. He was Curt Hennig's father. And the way we went, I charged and he charged. Ten seconds later, boom. So I came back to the dressing room, and you've got room in your navel for two peas and the heart of a promoter, and the promoter comes over. I can remember my nose was busted open and my eye was busted. I was sitting there and he shuffled over with his penny loafers--I guess they were big at that time because I remember them--and I was looking down because I was pretty ashamed. He said, "You did great, kid, how'd you like to go to Kansas City?" And I'm thinking, "Is this a fucking rib?" No, no, no, no. We were going over matches with this guy named Gust Karas, he was a promoter. He only had one leg and he's a diabetic. He's a real legend though. He's from the school I'm from. He's from the old days with the carnivals. He took a liking to me and bounced me from there to Dallas, and Dallas to New Brunswick, and New Brunswick to Montreal, to Los Angeles, to Kansas City, to Japan, to many places until I wound up in many more places.

**Clark:** What caused you to run away from home and your family at such a young age of thirteen?

**Piper:** My legs! No, I don't get into it. Never have, never will. Just not interested into it. It was nobody's fault. It's just that I was a wanderer maybe. I just took my bagpipes and I used to hitchhike. And when I hitchhiked, you had all these goons on the highway. When you're thirteen you don't want to be just throwing rocks at everybody, you want to pick your targets. So all these guys would be fighting for a position. I'd go down like about twenty-five feet or so and I'd pull my bagpipes out and I'd play my bagpipes. Those guys, they must have looked at this thirteen year old pimply-faced kid playing the bagpipes, and going, "What's he, O.J.? Give him a ride." And I swear, they would stop and I'd get a ride just like that, and I'd be off. And that's how I got rides. I'd play the pipes and they would throw in coins and shit. The pipes were the first half of my living.

**Clark:** So the bagpipes were always a part of your life?

**Piper:** I came in fifth in the world when I was fourteen years old. You're talking legit. When I was nineteen in the Olympic Auditorium, some guy says, "I know that he can't play the bagpipes because when he stops blowing, the music keeps going. He's got a tape recorder up there, I'm telling you." This was on a sports talk show. But you're talking legit.

**Clark:** What did you face after running away from home and how did you survive through that mentally, physically, and financially?

**Piper:** What did I face? The first thing I faced is I got cold and I got hungry. And then while you're getting cold and hungry, you finally start to get tired. This is the first night out on the street. Then, where are you going to go? Well, you try to find a place like an apartment building because at night time they're putting quarters in there and the dryer vents are heaving and there's warmth there. But there might be one or two other guys, but there might not be. So the first night you usually try to lay down and get some sleep and two or three guys come over and just kick the living shit out of you and take everything away from you. People that are on the street, they work at night and they sleep during the day because there's less chance of getting rolled. Then after your first night's finished and you've gotten rolled, you wake up and you're still hungry. Then you start to realize that possibly Lassie may not be going to jump over the fence! So then it starts to sink in and you start to meet other people and you become friends very quickly because you need a friend real bad and you try to sleep back to back. However, then you've got this small problem that we haven't addressed, and that's called food. So it's like, "Okay, let's get some food." Well, how are you going to get some food? You've got a couple ways. You go to the supermarket and buy it or you go to the supermarket and steal it. Those are your two options. Then, how are you going to get some money? Well, there's a couple ways. You could roll somebody, but I'm thirteen years old, I'm not real good at rolling people yet. And so you put your bagpipes out and you play for hours and hours and you may scrape up a couple bucks. Okay, you're fed, but there's also things called dumpster diving. Dumpster diving is like around eleven o'clock at night, twelve o'clock at night, in the alleys behind the restaurants. The restaurants are moving and they're throwing that food out that people don't eat and it's hitting that dumpster pretty heavy. And that's a good time to eat because the food's fairly fresh. So after a while you catch onto dumpster diving. And then you try to get yourself a partner and then you try to find out where the hell you're going in life or what your're doing and then you get real confused and then that's when the danger starts. You either die or you become one mean son of an unnamed goat.

**Clark:** And what saved you?

**Piper:** I didn't die, so I became one mean son of an unnamed goat. I was pretty handy anyway and I was a pretty aggressive kid, so I took the aggressive route of life.

**Clark:** What kind of trouble did you get into?

**Piper:** I'm sure the statue of limitations must have run out. I'd hope so. I was in trouble with the police constantly. I don't suppose it really fucking matters now (about not talking about it). I started with rolling people. I was kind of one of them cutesy little kids, believe it or not. The most easy, lucrative thing is to sell your body. That's the easiest thing to do on the street, unless you get into a situation where you're working where you take advantage of somebody, and just before the crucial moment, you just kick the shit out of them and take their money. That progresses from that into things like doing deals on the street, selling back and forth, which you might have to sell to do that. Robbing places becomes a real fast target because at that age with a $100, you can live a long time on $100. So if you scored $100, you'd be just a box of fluffy ducks. You graduate to other things like, "This guy needs to be beat up, this guy needs to be beat up, this guy owes me money," and maybe the next thing you know you own a block or whatever you're doing. It's just a progression, and if you don't get out of it then you progress and you become a professional. I was strictly trying to survive. I'll tell you a story, but I don't want to say everything. I got into some pretty serious back alley midnight things that I don't if he's here anymore. And that's the bottom line and I really don't give a shit because he's trying to kill me too. But I'm not saying anything more about that.

**Clark:** Did you have any friends or anyone who looked out for you during this period of your life?

**Piper:** No, I was on my own. That's what my problem was. I was sleeping on the street. That's how I got into youth hostels. A youth hostel is a place where you get there at six o'clock and you give them a quarter--and they have a ton of bunk beds--and they give you a towel, two sandwiches, a glass a milk, and a pack of cookies that had two of them that were chocolate chip, my favorite. You slop that down and they had rock and roll playing as loud as you could possibly play it. At the front it said to please check your weapons and drugs at the door, and they meant it. One of the youth hostels was in Toronto, Canada. It was on the right hand side of a YMCA and you went down some kind of hole, and it was down there. But there were a ton of bunk beds. You had to go to bed by, say nine, and you crashed. At 5:30 in the morning they just hit that rock and roll really loud and you had to get up and you had to clean everything up. They'd give you two eggs, a piece of bacon, and a towel, you'd grab a shower, and you'd get your ass out of there and don't come back. You couldn't come back the next night. And if you did have any drugs or weapons, they gave them back to you. That's a true story. I used to hustle Young Street in Toronto quite a bit. That was a good hustle there. At the same time, though, I was still trying to get an education. I just didn't stay out there. I even tried to go to a school. I smelled a little bit. It was like, "Where's your shower?" So school was hard to go to, but I made it. I got to the eighth or ninth grade. So what else do you want to know?

**Clark:** What kind...

**Piper:** (jokingly) Twelve-and-a-half inches. That's why I've got six kids. What else do you want to know?

**Clark:** (jokingly) O.J., innocent or guilty?

**Piper:** I can sum that one up real easy. I've got six kids and a beautiful wife. If somebody fucking cut my wife's throat, the last thing I'd do is go down the freeway with a gun to my head asking to talk to my mummy. I might be blowing every other mother fucker away on the planet, and I could understand that, but putting a gun to my own head and asking for my mummy, when some other guy took advantage of my family? Now he wants forty-seven pieces of evidence thrown out. Why? If I'm innocent, you guys are all fucked. "Okay, here, I'll only give you one hair. You want a hundred? Here, shave my head, let's get out of here because I can run the fastest of everybody and I want to find this son of a bitch and kill him with my own hands." Now you tell me, is he innocent or guilty? Well, it's pretty simple. You know, let's get serious, there's people trying to cure cancer, there's people we never hear of that are training blind dogs to help people. All this guy did was take a piece of pigskin and could run real fast. That's his contribution to society. Okay, he entertained a lot of guys that wish they were. And I never watch sports on TV. I love playing them all, but I hate watching them. So that's his contributrion. Free O.J.? When Roddy Piper had to go to the Grand Jury for steroids, where was the "Free R.P., let him go, take the juice out of Roddy," I never saw none of that. This mother fucker sliced his wife's throat and it's like, "Free O.J., don't squeeze the juice out of O.J. Oh, the poor guy." There was a poll taken by CNN Headline News, one of them bullshit things, and the poll says twenty-five percent of the black Americans think he won't get a fair trial. Give me a fucking break. Sixty percent of the whites think he's guilty and twenty-five percent of the black community thinks he's not guilty, and it's going to be racist. You guys are all fucked up. You know what you need to do? You need to spend four or five nights out on the street to get your life in perspective. There's that guy who pulled a little girl out. We never heard nothing about him. I just heard him on the news and he's back in court. He's pleaded innocent. I mean this guy took this little girl, ripped her out, did all those horrible things to her, and he's a career criminal pleading innocent. Here's a sincere, rotten, no good nothing, but they take O.J. and they build this up. Not that if this guy's guilty he doesn't deserve it, but that's not the same horrendous crime as horrendous as the other one. You don't hear about the other ones, that's my point.

**Clark:** What kind of attitude had you forge as a younger kid towards life in general?

**Piper:** I was a real bitter kid, but I wasn't a mean kid. I hate a bully. I was a little bitter but I held it inside pretty good. I have a button that just literally just comes on. I was born with it, nothing I can do without it. I don't blackout or go red and all that bullshit you hear, it's very calculated. Maybe that's trained, but it's, "Here we go." So I didn't give a damn about anybody. My favorite show is the Waltons, and at Christmas time, it's like, "Who wants the drumstick?" That's all ever we wanted. And I met my wife eighteen years ago, she's 4'11", 100 pounds and she's having another baby, our seventh. When I met her she changed my life quite a bit, but until that point my outlook was that I wasn't afraid of anybody and "don't get in my way and don't even look at me wrong." And sometimes you don't even have to do nothing, you're just breathing my way. Without being a bully, though. I'm a midget in a giants sport. I'm the lightest of them all.

**Clark:** You talked about getting to eighth or ninth grade in school. On the other hand, what kind of an education did you get being a teenage runaway and making it on your own and basically living on the streets?

**Piper:** I learned how to protect myself from the dark side of life--which now in hindsight being 20/20--and that nobody can fuck with my kids. There ain't a trick I don't know. I don't believe there's a trick that hasn't been tried on me. I don't believe there's a trick I don't know between on the streets and starting when I was fifteen with those old-timers. There was like three hundred people in a garage and when the old-timers come in, you got up and gave them the chair. I come from what they call the old, old, old school. And when I was fifteen they had guys like Mad Dog Vachon, Chick Garibaldi, Gino Garibaldi, Leo Garibaldi. They didn't give a shit, hard-drinking, hard-living, as hard as want to go. Don't you call my sport phony. Don't talk about anybody else, if you call me a phony, I'm real, mother fucker. You're looking for trouble, just even look at me like you think that. I've done it a million times in a million bars. I was king of the frat house. Ask anybody. Between Muroco and I, it might have been a toss up, but we hung out together all the time.

Nobody can mess with my kids. There ain't no strangers that can fool me. I know what strangers look like. I did a videotape for kids on how to protect themselves from strangers. So it gave me that education. The other education it gave me was dealing with promoters. You've got the room in your navel for two peas and the heart of a promoter. I've argued with the biggest promoters. That's why in Hollywood this year I'm doing six features and a record album with A&M records.

I don't know if anybody else (in wrestling) has ever been fifteen. I've been told I've got the record because it's against the law now. But when you're fifteen years old, imagine how much Pat Patterson tries to take advantage of you. (laughs) I had them all. I had Don Fargo, Raskin, I had a whole generation of guys you probably never heard of that were tough. So it wasn't a fifteen year old scared little kid. When it comes to promoters trying to duke me out of my money, I had been playing that game already for two and a half years. So I was hard to con and they couldn't fool me and they saw the raw piece of coal. That gave me a little bit of an edge as opposed to, "Just do this kid and just do this." "Ah, fuck you, you old man. What are you going to do? Beat me up again. Fuck, I've been beat up a thousand times on the street." When they saw this and then they saw my style of fighting, I became like the boy wonder and I popped by that time Los Angeles, Portland, Charlotte, Atlanta, whatever territories I had popped by that time. And then they asked me to the Garden and Freddie Blassie stuck my bagpipes full of paper. I'll never forgive him for that. I went out there and they called me the Japanese boy wonder. They were scared straight about this guy selling out any arenas and popping territories left and right. I go to the Garden and there were Japanese guys all over the place because I had been training with a young Fujinami and all these guys.

**Clark:** What do you regret about your childhood?

**Piper:** Every fucking part of it. (laughs) The only thing I regret right now is--oh shit, it's a bag of worms--I have some serious injuries. Once I got a hold of that first match and they said they'd take me to another, I never stopped, ever. I kept going and going and going till like when I first retired at Wrestlemania 3. But then I got money and that changes a whole lot. But I'm busted up in some places real good. So for that, I'm sorry I wasn't smarter about that part. That's a downside to the route I took. And I wanted to be a psychologist. But why go to school to find out you know nothing?

**Clark:** Do you regret that decision of running away from home?

**Piper:** No, I was getting killed. Fuck no. Shit, I wouldn't have lived if I stayed there.

**Clark:** What dreams did you hold as a kid?

**Piper:** Dreams? Self-sufficiency was definitely a dream of mine. You ask me something nicely like you did, I did the interview for you. If you fucking tell me--McMahon, I've dealt with them all--I'll spit in your face even if it costs me millions of dollars. I'm just that way. It's not a choice.

**Clark:** What kind of an experience did you have boxing?

**Piper:** The reason I started wrestling was because I broke my hand boxing. I was a boxing champion. I was much an athlete. During the times I could, one of the ways I showered was I was so young so I could usually con my way into the YMCA and I'd get a workout because I loved it. I wanted to be a boxing champion. I trained at many different gyms and I had a real knack for it. But I broke my left hand in an excursion so I started amateur wrestling because it took a long time for that hand to heal. I've had a knack for it and won the 167 amateur wrestling championship.

**Clark:** You told me about how you first got introduced to professional wrestling, and how did they come up with the Roddy Piper name?

**Piper:** I was sleeping at the Police Athletic League and that's where I was wrestling. The coach there was also a professional wrestling referee and somebody just didn't show up and they needed somebody to fight the guy. They didn't tell me nothing, they just said they'd pay me $25. I went in and it was Larry Hennig. That's where my pipe band played me down. It was a big thing for them, and they knew what position I was in, so the whole band played me down. So I didn't become "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and go, "Okay, what am I going to do? My name is Ralph Dirshinskin. Now what should I do? I'll call myself Piper, yeah, I'll call myself "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and I'll play the second hardest instrument in the world. Can you get me one of those? The what? The bagpipes, okay, the bagpipes." Fuck, I had been playing the bagpipes. I started playing the bagpipes when I was five and a half, six years old. I lived on an Indian reservation when I was six. And I wore a kilt then. I was the only one with all these Indians. You don't think I got into some fights? (laughs) So the thing when people say this guy is this gimmick or this guy is this gimmick, I'm not a gimmick. I can fight my ass off and I was playing the bagpipes and wearing a kilt long before I ever heard of professional wrestling. They didn't even have TV where I was.

So my whole pipe band played me in and the way I got my name was, my first name in Roderick. Well, the short form for Roderick is Roddy. And a guy that plays the bagpipes is called a piper. That night, with the band and everything, I was a sub. The announcer was there and he just didn't know what to say. He only knew my first name was Roddy because they had introduced me. But for some reason he didn't know what was going on and he just said, "And down the aisle's coming now, Roddy the Piper." And the "the" just got dropped some place along the line. I never asked or ever said anything. And the "Rowdy" just kind of came naturally. And the "Hot Rod"'s because I've got six kids. (laughs)

**Clark:** Was there any hesitation on your part getting into wrestling and/or did you have second thoughts on pursuing a career in the business?

**Piper:** I wasn't afraid of anything and I'm still not.

**Clark:** Where were you working for the first several years of your career and could you describe your experience there before you went to the Los Angeles territory?

**Piper:** First place was Kansas City. There used to be a guy there named Lord Alfred Hayes. He used to chase me around with his dick in his hand after he showered. I could tell you stories that would put tarantulas on you. The whole thing was a rib. They knew I was that young and they were that old and rough. He chased me and it got to a point where I wouldn't shower there. I would just get my stuff on and go to a place where they leave the light on for you.

**Clark:** Where did you go from Kansas City and then how did you get hooked up with Mike and Gene LaBell in Los Angeles?

**Piper:** I went from K.C. to Dallas, and Dallas to New Brunswick, and back to Dallas to New Brunswick, to Montreal, to Japan. From Japan, Mike LaBell had a deal through McMahon Sr. through Japan, and I went over there and Fujinami, Bruiser Brody, Baba, Stan Hansen were there. I was there when Stan Hansen had his very first trip there. I had to do everything for him, he'd blow up in three minutes. (laughs) Then from there to Los Angeles where it was the first time that I actually sold out a territory that was considered on its ass. That's what started the reputation.

**Clark:** So do you think it was Los Angeles that put you on the map?

**Piper:** Yeah, L.A. I think put me on the map. I was gaining a reputation before that, but I hadn't had an opportunity as a single main event to sell out a huge house. The Olympic Auditorium held about 15,000. At that time that was big numbers. I was like the first guy to sell it out since I think Tolos and Blassie. That was my first big break, and I went from there to Portland, Oregon, and I sold that out completely for like twenty-six times in a row. I hold the record. From there, with lots of places in between, to Charlotte where I beat Flair for the U.S. title and I was the first guy that wore a t-shirt that said "I scare Flair." From there I started doing Atlanta and Charlotte together, the promoters I'm sure were trying to kill me because they hated my guts because I've never been a kiss-ass or a stooge. I was working them both.

L.A. put me on the map, but nationally on the map, Bob Armstrong and Gordon Solie were the guys that put me out there. They'd never had ratings as high and never have since that time or before as when I first became a commentator with Gordon Solie and Bob Armstrong. Those were the highest ratings they've ever had, period. I was the first guy to actually have a wrestling contract signed. Not the ones in Japan, over here in the United States. They fired me about a year into it. The guy I was supposed to wrestle three days later in the Omni was Jerry Lawler. They fired me on a Wednesday. The Omni dropped from doing $70,000, $80,000, $90,000 to $20,000, and it's never come back since. Fuck you, Jim Barnett.

**Clark:** Who were some of the unforgettable guys for you from the Los Angeles territory because of an influence they had on you or because of what they might have taught you?

**Piper:** Leo Garibaldi was real influential to me. Also I used to go a hall in UCLA and they had films from '56 to the '60s of Gino and Chic Garibaldi, Warren Bockwinkle's dad, Mr. Moto, Gorgeous George, Baron Leonie, and you could play it forwards, backwards, still, frame by frame. I learned every move there was ever to know at that time. I was very much into movies. I studied and I studied and I studied and I studied, and when I wasn't studying I was wrestling, and when I wasn't wrestling I was creating shit. I studied like a dog.

**Clark:** What were some of your favorite memories from those days working in Los Angeles in the mid to late 70s?

**Piper:** Well, being that young I was living on the beach. So I was doing what I needed to do because nothing mattered. I had no responsibilities, I was free as a bird. And I was getting all this money all the time. I was never in shortage of anything and I was running up and down the beach and living at a place called The Flamingo Hotel, 1733 Ocean Avenue. It's condemned and it's got barbed wire all around it. A couple guys used to get blown away in the alley every Friday night. They gave me my own room with bars on it and stuff. I was up there with Don Fargo. Those are memories, and bouncing back and forth. In Hollywood, Henry Winkler and Carl Reiner wanted me to go into movies with them. I said, "No, I'm not interested in that." I was very purist in my sport and I still am. But that was the stupidest move I made. It was a movie called *The One and Only,* I did that with them and then they asked me to do another one. I said, "No, I'm on my way. I was on the road."

**Clark:** How did your two tryout matches for Vince McMahon Sr.'s WWWF at Madison Square Garden and a match at a TV taping in 1979 come about and what came out of it?

**Piper:** Because I had this reputation. By that time I had popped a lot of territories. L.A. real big time for three years, Portland big time for three years. When they brought me to the Garden, Freddie Blassie, it was a shoot because I was up and coming. It's a very vicious world. The bagpipes are a woodwind instrument and they need to be blowed up and primed and then sat down and ready to go. It's not like playing a piano. So I primed them and put them down, and they shoved them full of paper so they wouldn't work. I used to make everybody get, "Quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet," and then I'd play these bagpipes in either a horrendous way or all of a sudden I'd play of a world caliber. So they stuffed it full of paper because really they were ribbing me because they really didn't want me in there because they wanted to keep the jobs. So when I went to blow my bagpipes up, and I finally got the whole Garden quiet, nothing came out so I looked like a real ding bat. So it was like, "Don't call us, we'll call you." That's what came out of it.

**Clark:** What were your impressions of the WWWF and their organization after going there for that tryout in 1979?

**Piper:** I really didn't care. New York wasn't some place I desperately wanted to go, they invited me. I was just on a roll in the egotism of drawing the most money. Then all of a sudden I was in North Carolina and Jim Crockett called me and said, "Vince McMahon Sr. called and asked if you'd come in." I said, "I don't know," because Barnett wanted to take over the world, and he did, and that's why they had me down there. But he was scared of making enemies business-wise of somebody in Chicago. And then these McMahons were going for it, and they said straight up, "Hey, you want to conquer the world, get a side." And I invented Piper's Pit and did all the rest of the stuff.

**Clark:** Now before that and then going to Charlotte and Atlanta, I believe you went to Portland, Oregon to work for Don Owen. Could you tell me all about what that experience meant to you and the relationship that evolved between you and Don Owen?

**Piper:** Oh, I had some of the greatest times of my life. I didn't find my home at that time, but I found the woman I was going to share my home with the rest of my life. I didn't find my home at that time because we went all over the place. We were gypsies. I had a good relationship with Don Owen. He's a good man, and I also sold his arena out twenty-six weeks at a time, so he thought that I was okay. (laughs) They were great times because I had tag partners like Rick Martel, Killer Brooks, the Sheepherders, Buddy Rose, Dutch Savage. We went to some real pioneered towns. In these logging towns, there was a lot of welcome, "Come on." Everybody was way out to lunch and it was a great time. But that's what happened to Buddy Rose, he was too afraid to leave Oregon or otherwise he would have been a much bigger name I think than he is now. But I was never afraid to leave. I was saying, "I've been here three years, and I've got to get out of here and advance my career," and away I went. Then I went to Charlotte, North Carolina for two or three years and then I started doing for two years Georgia and North Carolina, working both territories at the same time.

**Clark:** In 1981 you left Portland for the National Wrestling Alliance in Georgia, the hottest territory at the time and what was the first exposure on cable for pro wrestling. What was it like to be a part of all that?

**Piper:** It was the first national exposure, when we really started to get big, where they were really tuning into it. I also started all the first pay-per-views, Starrcade, every originator of every pay-per-view. But Georgia had rebels. They just picked rebels. We were just saying, "Hey, fuck you, we're gone, we're gone, we're gone," and all of a sudden it was myself, Shults, Muroco, Orton, Slater, and some nasty names. So there was no law and order. What are you going to tell them? "Sit down?" There ain't nobody that could talk to these guys. It was real rough. There was a lot of back dressing room fights. There was a lot of animosity on the mic--if you went back you'll see people trying to take time from others if you had to share two minute, fifty-four second interviews back and forth. That's what made it so damn interesting. That's what really got it off the ground, not a bunch of fucking clowns. The inmates ran the asylum, and that's what the people want to see in this particular case. That's where the intensity was from. There was no doubt in anybody's mind at that time there was people getting hurt pretty bad.

**Clark:** Out of all the territories and promoters you worked for before going to the WWF full-time, which and who was your favorite to work?

**Piper:** I've never been a big booster of promoters. I think, though, the favorite was probably Don Owen in Portland, Oregon. Reason being, he would do things like this. When it came to Thanksgiving, this one year I can remember specifically but he did it every year, he would buy turkeys and give turkeys to all the wrestlers to bring home to their families. And they were nice size turkeys. But this one time the midgets were in on the card, so he bought them cornish hens--his sick sense of humor and he was always bitching about something, but he was about as straight up as you're going to get. So I kind of like that old man. He's a good guy.

**Clark:** How was your lifestyle and financial situation changing when you were jumping from territory to territory before going to the WWF?

**Piper:** My lifestyle didn't change so much because I've always been on the road. Financially, when I started when I fifteen, I said to myself, "By the time I'm seventeen or eighteen, if this isn't going anywhere, change gears." And I monitored my production value as I went along and by the time I was seventeen, eighteen, then I would say, "Okay, if I'm twenty, twenty-one, and if I'm not something, I'm out of here."

Buddy Rose is a good example of--he's a guy with a whole lot of talent that got a lot of recognition in the northwest and got afraid to go any place else, I think for a fear of failing. When you're hot, that's when you leave. You don't wait until they're asking you to leave, you leave before they ask you to. And he never did that. I'm not saying it's right or wrong, I'm just saying that's the style he approached. He never took the chances to get any place and he just kind of bore down. And a lot of guys will chase that carrot in front of the donkey. I know another fella, I just won't mention this guy's name because of respect. He's an old, old-timer that stayed in Los Angeles because he also was trying to carry on a Hollywood career. And he would say to me, "Yeah, but at any time, any day, my agent could call," and he's still waiting for that call.

That chasing of the limelight, that style, I never got into wrestling for that. I got in by accident to get a meal. So in my life, it was as long as I was making progress, and financially was the way I measured progress. Before I got to the WWF I had held twenty-one different championships, every place I went I had won the championship. But it didn't mean nothing to me. It was about the money. I'm sure you must have heard the old adage that "I'm five times Olympic champion," and you're talking to your land lady. "I've got no money, but here's these medals," and "That can get you a cup of coffee and then get out." So I always measured my rising in my sport to get to the top. First of all, my mark was to be the best, period. So my esculation of my career, I monitered constantly. And I didn't want to be one of those people that all of a sudden you're thirty-four years old and you're still waiting for that big break, because you just ain't got it then. So I took that type of an approach to it and unless I was financially gaining and also getting notoriety from my sport, I would have been out of there. But everything just kind of kept on going. Of course, I've been slapped in the face plenty of times. But the shameful part's not getting knocked down, the shameful part's not getting up. So it changed financially and it made me independent. I was fairly set before I came to the WWF. And then with the WWF, because of the magnitude of which it took off to with Wrestlemania 1 and even before that with "The War to Settle the Score," it just kept esculating. And then it got to a point where it got old, but that's a different question.

**Clark:** How did your life and your financial situation change when you went to work for the World Wrestling Federation in 1983?

**Piper:** Well, I never bought anything unless I had the cash for it. My first car was a Vega and I had a tent and I slept in it with a pitbull. There used to be an old trick promoters would play on you. Nick Gulas, Eddie Graham, there were a lot of guys that used to play these tricks. It was the old story of "I can't afford to stay, I can't afford to leave." A lot of people would get stuck in a place because they would come in there and the promoter would wine them and dine them and dance them and give them a lot of money, and they'd say, "Buy a house and get your kids in school." And this legitimately took place. And then they'd get settled and the promoters would cut them right off at the nuts and they would cut their pay in half and then jerk them around and not book them. And then before you knew it, you were almost living paycheck to paycheck. Coming where I came from I was kind of hip to that trick. So my two-bit philosophy was if I bought a car, I bought it with cash. As we went along, by the time I went to the WWF, everything I owned I had cash for, plus a bank account. And with the WWF, when buying my first ranch, I had the cash for it. But as a financial advisor, it's not smart to pay cash for it, so what I did was put the cash in the bank and then say, "Okay, I want to blow all the money for the house because it's a write-off." So, financially, I made probably as much money as anybody in the WWF, maybe because I was there at the beginning or whatever reasons. But huge amounts of money were there all of a sudden, in comparison to what I had made before. Actually, I was getting so many checks there would be checks I would forget to cash and then three, four, five months later I would find them. So it was a nice ride.

**Clark:** How did your notoriety and people recognizing you change when the WWF went national?

**Piper:** Before the WWF I had that national notoriety on TBS. I was on TBS and I was wrestling in the area of Charlotte and Atlanta. Atlanta at the time was trying to do what McMahon did later, but the people who were running it didn't have the balls to. So I was doing commentary and wrestling on a national level for two or three years. I was the first guy actually to have a six figure contract on paper in wrestling through TBS, and then they fired me. So in coming to the WWF, for me, I was one of the few guys--Tommy Rich and Rhodes had that national thing but they didn't make the jump--who had the national exposure. McMahon Sr. had asked me to come to the WWF because they wanted to take over the world. Atlanta wanted to, but they ran into trouble because there was somebody in Chicago that they were mates with and they didn't want to step on any toes, so in other words, they just chickened out. But McMahon Sr.'s idea was to take over the world. And I was actually asked to come and do that job, and that's how I got there.

**Clark:** You were definitely a big part of Vince McMahon's nationwide expansion with the WWF. What do you think it was that lifted wrestling in that time period to a height that may never be obtained again?

**Piper:** At the time that McMahon Sr. was calling these people, most of them were real rebels. In our business you've got people that live next door to the promoter and you've got people that's never been to a promoter's house. They had guys like Shults, Orndorff, Muroco, Orton, Snuka, a lot of guys that had been around and really knew their sport well and were all bidding for positions in a real serious way. Everybody was not necessarily cutting each other's throat, it was pretty much right up front. Because you had so many guys with so much talent, it really had nothing to do with the promoters. They were going for it in so many different ways and it created that excitement. After "The War to Settle the Score" on MTV, myself against Hogan, which went into Wrestlemania 1, that got notoriety in Time magazine. And then when I kicked Cyndi Lauper and hit Mr. T and all that stuff, it went on major magazines. Then it became very much like *The Elephant Man,* where nobody wanted anything to do with him and all of a sudden he kind of became the bold thing to do. So we had forty elephant men. I would come to arenas and people like George Thorogood in Philadelphia would come down and all these different celebrities from different areas of celebritation, or whatever the word is, would come in. And so when you would scan ringside, not only would you see these maniacs, but there would the governors to people in the music world. The music world really helped because on "The War to Settle the Score" there was some people I never even met like Twisted Sister, Rod Stewart, the lady who was running for vice president--Geraldine Ferraro, Little Richard, Dr. Ruth Westheimer. MTV was new and these people had such a grasp on the youth and it just transferred even stronger over to us. And then also we got our own cartoon show on I think it was CBS. For two or three years we had a cartoon show with Hogan and myself--I mean everybody was on it, but they kind of featured us. We had all that publicity at one time, plus the best publicity you can get is somebody else talking about you and somebody else of notoriety that you don't know talking about you. Like David Letterman mentioned me at whatever time. So it became that kind of a bold thing and everybody started tuning in.

And I created this show called Piper's Pit. Your conventional wrestling fan is the salt of the earth and usually a really good human being. They're your blue collar, heart of America type of people. With Piper's Pit I made it so it would appeal to everyone. In other words, "I'll rip your lungs out and tear your eyes out," that's bullshit, first of all, it's illegal. So I tried to create it so it would appeal not only to our hardcore fan but also to your lawyer and the frat houses would get into it. It would be the thing the frat houses would turn on. And if you noticed, they bounced it around over the hour. They used to put it on exactly halfway through the program, but people wouldn't tune in sometimes until then, so they would bounce it around. And plus with all the other talent with what they were doing, it just took off.

**Clark:** Back during that period the WWF was basically Hulk, Andre, and Roddy Piper. What do you think it was about Roddy Piper for you to become as big of a superstar as you became?

**Piper:** What did it? I think you have the style of people that will go do interviews and can't back it up in the ring and then you have people that are really good in the ring that can't do interviews. I think combining the two together and being contemporary is it. If you see a guy, and you say, "Wait a second, he's just a big dumb wrestler. But, no, wait a second, he plays the bagpipes and came in fifth in the world playing the bagpipes. So hang on, there's got to more to this guy than just, 'I'll spit on you.' Plus, the guy's a little bit of a raving maniac." But at the same time there was that improvising wit that you're not afraid to throw it at anybody. And if you put that all together, there's not many guys that make a package of themselves like that. The reason is because when they were fifteen they weren't building a ring and wrestling in it at the same time. They don't know the sport from the inside out. I think the difference was kind of a basic honesty there--"This is what I am." There's an old saying that I learned years ago that you can't make people believe everything's for real in wrestling, but you can damn well make them believe you are. And I'm for real. That kind of bottom line philosophy is what really I was all about. I was an amateur champion and I can be kind of a hard guy to handle and all that.

We used to take Piper's Pits to towns and I don't know how many times they had fans run in and try to kick my ass, and you're on your own. There was even one that hit the AP. I was scared to death. A mum was stir-frying the vegetables some place in New Jersey, I think it was. She's stir-frying the vegetables and the two kids came up, fourteen and sixteen, and one kid comes up and throws the sleeper on her and the other grabs her legs and puts her out. So the mum doesn't know what to do, and she takes the kids to court. And the judge says, "Well, where did you get this from?" "I saw Roddy Piper put it on Hulk Hogan." I'm going, "Oh, I'm dead meat." And so the judge ruled that they couldn't watch wrestling until they were eighteen years old. True story, it was in the papers. Stuff like that would come out.

Then I went and forged and did a couple of movies. I was the first one to actually do a movie that hit all the theaters, *They Live*, and then Hogan did *No Holds Barred* with McMahon. But I was kind of like the first guy to get in there.

You know, fans aren't stupid and they look back and they see this and they can figure out who's who. And I think that the daring part, the lack of fear, and a lot of stupidity really helped to esculate it.

**Clark:** How do you best describe the phenomena of Hulk Hogan?

**Piper:** Hogan? He's a fella that has got a good amount of charisma and you know you're either in the office talking to McMahon or you're calling him long distance. If you're put on television where you're the ending of the show all the time and you're marketed as "Hulk Rules" and you're marketed that way, then you're actually psychologically training the fans to that that's your boy. So if you combine all that with his natural charisma and his size, then you get what you have. And who else was powder-puffed like that? Who else was taken care of like that? Like they would never let me say, only one time I got away with it, "I'm the reason Hogan's got no hair." They would edit so much stuff I said, but it was okay for him to say that I was wearing a dress. So he was well protected and from that protection, he did what he did. Good for him, I guess if that's the way you want to go about it. The only thing is, you've got to be able to look at yourself in the mirror. The other thing that they arranged for him was the connection with Mr. T. Well, Mr. T was a television star and so he rode on that until they didn't need T anymore and then basically kicked him aside--very, very brutal, but smart business I suppose. Me, I can't do business like that.

**Clark:** Do you think that in any way you might have deserved that spot that Hulk Hogan got in leading the WWF?

**Piper:** I look at it as, if it wasn't for Joe Frazier, who would Muhammad Ali be? With me, my problem was I didn't take any shit from anybody, including the promoters. In Vince McMahon's office right now, as you walk into his office, on the lefthand side is a big oak box with two brass handles inside and it's encased in glass. Inside is a Louisville Slugger bat, and hanging from the bat is a string with a large hammer, and it says on a brass plaque, "First come, first serve, R.P." Because I told McMahon, I said, "You know, you've got the TV and you've got more money than I do, so if you fuck me, I'm just going to take a piece of a baseball bat and kill you," and I sent it to him. So that's maybe not the smartest thing to do, but I meant it. I don't take no dives and I don't do no windows. In the WWF I had my shoulders pinned to the mat one time by Bret Hart, and that was my second to last match. With Mr. T, they wanted him to pin me. And I said fuck you. In the boxing match, he was scared to death, "Fuck you, you want to beat me? Knock me out." In hindsight being 20/20, when you have a guy that is a purist in a sport, promoters can't trust them. Because what if a promoter wants you to do something, and you say, "No, it's against what I believe in." And then I left McMahon with Wrestlemania 3 and I went did *They Live*. And thank god it did some business, which put me in more power. Everything I do is pretty calculated. The reason I had left was they had turned me, if you want to call it good guy, and they turned to cheering me. In Wrestlemania 2 about the second round with Mr. T, they just starting chanting my name. I've never been one to say, "Please like me." They just turned and that's the best way it could possibly be done. I know it came back to me that Hogan said, "Hey, I'll just hold onto his kilt." He was saying all this stuff through McMahon and they had been told, "No, no, no, don't worry." So I was never a threat when I was fighting him, but when they turned me they got real concerned about it. Well, so I took off again. I was never in it for the limelight and I think that's not true with most of the guys that are in my sport. I think that the limelight is a big part of it. For me, I hate it to be quite honest with you.

**Clark:** How would you describe working for Vince McMahon on and off for the last ten or so years and what he did for your career?

**Piper:** He didn't do anything for my career. Like Piper's Pit, I made that up in a bar in St. Louis. As far as who should have been in that "War to Settle the Score?" There wasn't much of a decision to be made there. I was walking in and they were trying to kill me. I had already been nationally on TV. Hogan had come from I think Minneapolis and he started in a bit part in a *Rocky* film, as opposed to going through the grind and really being from the dirt up. Which I think in my case, there may be a little bit of jealousy because, "Why did I have to starve so hard?" You know, nothing's fair about life.

If he could've killed me off, he would have done so I think a long time ago. The thing is, before there was a WWF, I had been the hard way to everybody's town because I worked in just about every territory and was on top in every one of them, with the exception of Tennessee and I wouldn't work for Bill Watts because he had a real bad rep for paying. So all these people had already seen me struggle to the top without a Vince McMahon. And for me, proof is in quitting in April of 1991, and not having anything to do with wrestling at all, and then being asked to go to Wrestlemania 10 and walking unannounced into the Garden to referee the match with the champion against Bret Hart, and the match starts and the people in the arena start chanting my name. It kind of speaks for itself. And that's nothing that Vince McMahon did and I hadn't been on the tube for two years. So it was a function of just hard work on the commodities part. Other than McMahon having the television vehicle and being smart enough to expoit that, I think at that time we had like three hundred independents plus USA cable and then Sky Channel which picked us up around the world, you've got to give him credit for that, but nobody told me to smile or anything. "I know what I'm doing, my job is to draw money. If you knew, Vince, how to draw money, I know how cheap you are, Vince, you'd put a fucking kilt on yourself and go out there and do it. It would save you a hell of a lot of money you've got to pay me."

And that really is the basis where they've got the young wrestlers bamboozled now. What they don't understand is, if the promoter could do it, he would. But he can't, and that's your stronghold. When you go out, you can get the job done. So he didn't do nothing for my career.

**Clark:** What do you think Vince McMahon, one of the most or the most powerful promoter in the business, has done for the wrestling business, both positively and negatively, with the family entertainment direction he has taken wrestling in?

**Piper:** I think he has hurt my sport in one way and enhanced it in another. It's a doubled-edged sword. In the beginning, there was the earth and then McMahon came along and there was water. In the beginning, when I was telling you about all these rebels, McMahon had no control over anything. I can remember him at Wrestlemania 1. You know, after three or four thousand matches you tend to lose those jitters. And I remember him running up and down the hallway yelling this and that, and I say, "Hey, would you just stop it?" Some big magazine or maybe *60 Minutes* says, "Is wrestling real or phony?" And he says, "Hum, I don't know." Oh, there's a good fucking answer, Vin-Vin.

As time went on he got more powerful financially and the WWF got large, which he knew how to do. It used to be if I came to Philly in the Spectrum, they'd have "Jimmy Snuka versus Roddy Piper." But then he was smart enough to change it to "The WWF is coming to town," and then on the promos you would realize who's fighting who. In the beginning the WWF didn't mean anything, but that was his way of watering the talent so he wouldn't have to pay so much. So he could get away with "The WWF's coming, and then you'd have these tremendous athletes coming in." Then after a while all it was was the WWF, the WWF, the WWF. Now you're seeing signs that it just doesn't mean quite so much anymore. Well, why? Does the novelty wear off? It's because, the young guys are just as talented or more, they're just as good athletes or better, but they're not trained individually properly. They weren't trained individually from some area. Like George Gortiankle and Karl Gotch were two of the guys that broke me in, and they're two of the toughest guys probably ever, ever. And somebody from some other part of the world would be broken in, so we had completely different philosophies. Now it's like clones coming out. But on the family entertainment side of it, at the same time, because our society's become so violent, this new show I made up, The Bottom Line, although I'm edited a lot in the damn thing, it is very much morality conscious. I hear a lot from a lot of people, people call me and ask me different things for advice. And the WCW says, "We don't really like Roddy in the Bottom Line. We'd like him to come to WCW, but we don't really like the Bottom Line because it's just kind of soft." Well, guys, if I go on and be the same hard-ass Roddy Piper that I can be, it gets old. Right now I feel that I'm almost the conscious of the WWF and the morality voice. Like I'm still married to same woman, I'm the one raising kids, I wasn't in on the child molestation charges. I was just a steroid goof. And I was just a pawn, I was the least guilty. If everybody else had taken the same philosophy, "Yeah, I took them, what about it?" But everybody was like, "Oh, no, I took an aspirin one time," then he wouldn't be in court right now as we're speaking. So with the Bottom Line, it's more family oriented. So at the same time when I say he's watered down the sport and made it family entertainment... Like Dink and Doink, I wouldn't piss... I wouldn't have anything to do with Dink and Doink.

**Clark:** Hey, you don't have to be a family entertainer in this interview.

**Piper:** Okay, well, cool, I wouldn't piss on them to put them out! They have no business being in my sport, no business walking out there, and they're portraying exactly what people used to say about us, about us being a bunch of clowns, until all of a sudden Wrestlemania 1 exploded and we had all this respect and people we're going wow. And then you brought it right back to obviously some midget and some guy you painted up, it's foolish. I'm not a gimmick. To go and say, "Okay, you're going to be a trashman, you're going to be a little clown, you're going to be a big clown." Huh, what are you talking about? But on the other side, the WCW, they're whopping on each other trying to gain back this legitimacy, and there's a fine line. Like Piper's Pit was kind of family orientateed with an edge, and that's about as far as a stretch as I would have gone for an entertainment part. But once I got in the ring, I always believed people want to see some kick-ass action. They don't want to see Irwin R. Shyster open up his briefcase and some flash powder go off. You know, who gives a shit? And it holds no credibility or water. On the other hand, the WCW's trying to make it seem like every pay-per-view is the Super Bowl and that they're the greatest. They got so hung up on "We're going to beat the WWF." Well, shit, they haven't drawn three hundred people in three hundred years. As a matter of fact, since they fired me the Omni went from $80,000 to $20,000, and they don't run it now. So I think that McMahon on one hand has taken it too far with a bunch of guys that had watched us come up and were dying and will do anything they say. On the other hand, the WCW are taking it way over. Like the Hogan-Flair thing, well, Vince did that. It's been done. I had an idea for that, but I'm going into my next feature on Monday and it will take me eight weeks.

**Clark:** Who are some of the people in the business--because it's never been a place to meet true, true friends--who you've gained a lot of respect for and become true friends with?

**Piper:** One hand, almost. I can turn to a picture right here, as I'm looking at a picture Bret Hart gave to me. It's got a picture of him with his Michael Jackson haircut, and it says, "Dear Roddy, the best chance you have if you want to rise to the top is to give yourself up to loneliness, fear nothing, and work hard. I learned all these things from you. Thank you very much. Your friend, Bret." That guy right there. The other guys that I liked that were really sincere friends--Muroco, Rick Martel. (pauses).

**Clark:** How about Ric Flair?

**Piper:** Yeah, a long time ago. Flair and I hung out. I was a little wild when I was younger. We went to Santa Domingo years ago, which is a martial law country, and San Juan, and I was kind of covering his back and we hung out quite a bit. A lot of people don't like Ric. I do like Ric because I realized that a lot of people threatened him. I'm in my own circle and he's in his own circle. I realized his insecurities and so we got along actually very well and we had a lot of fun and raised a lot of hell. But I guess I didn't mention him because it's been so many years. But another guy, Sgt. Slaughter, I'll trust him with my family. I wouldn't say that about anybody. Those three guys are three real jam-up guys that if you were in a jam, if somebody's coming at you with a knife, they'd jump in front and they would be right there for you. We used to have a lot of riots before it got like it is now. Those three guys are the three.

**Clark:** Regarding steroids, how would you honestly describe your usage of them during your years as a pro wrestler and what was motivating you to take them?

**Piper:** I never bothered with steroids until I was about ten years or eleven years into the sport, so when I was about twenty-five, twenty-six. And the reason wasn't a purist reason. The reason was that one of the side effects of steroids is they cause acne. And I hated that and I had that as a kid, and I didn't want it to flare up at all so I kind of stayed away from them. But, really, I was more or less a midget. I'm only 6'1" and a half and was 240, 250 when I was heavy in the WWF, but I was still a midget. I was working with Andre and all the others.

With an athlete and steroids, I can't understand anybody in high school using steroids at all. Once you get out of high school, you get a job or you go to college or whatever you do. I don't understand those guys using steroids at all. But if you're a professional athlete and you have pushed yourself as far as you can possibly go and you have really trained your heart out and you've done everything you can, and now you have an opportunity to make a couple million dollars on something, I understand that. And so, "Okay, I'm going to take the chance," and it may push you over that edge, because this is what you do for a living, And if you're smart about it and you control it, then I understand. Whether it's right or wrong for the body and the purists, is irrelevant for a guy without an education that's feeding a family. The doctors say it's bad for you, the government doesn't like it, like I give a fuck. The government doesn't mind taking forty percent of my wages. I have a family to feed so I really don't care what anybody thinks. So at that point I needed the extra strength and weight to deal with guys 320 pounds, to deal with Andre and to be on top of all those guys and to achieve. There was three franchises, the franchise actually was Hogan and myself, and Andre had always kind of been there and he was in a class all by himself because he obviously was so huge and that was his drawing power. But to stay on top of those guys, that's the extra help I needed. So I did it. And with no remorse whatsoever about it.

**Clark:** When and why did you stop using steroids?

**Piper:** The reason I stopped using steroids was because in 1976 I was asked to a movie with Henry Winkler and Carl Reiner called *The One and Only*. I didn't want to do it and I had no interest in it whatsoever, but through the influence of Mike LaBell and Eileen Eaton, who was a big boxing promoter out of L.A., I said okay. So I did this small part in this movie and then I continued my wrestling career. On Piper's Pit, nobody ever told me what to say. I improvised it. I thought, of course, but I improvised it and I got into the creative part. And I really like creating. And then I went off and I did *They Live*.

For the movies and acting, it's (using steroids) apples and oranges. To be a leading man actor you must also acquire a certain shape. And steroids has nothing to do with it, you need to get as skinny as you can possibly get so your face is as skinny as it can possibly look because you're more attractive on camera. It's very sexually orientated, and that's what it is. So, "Well, Rod, what are doing? You're coming out here, you're doing the roids. You're doing a movie. Well, why are you taking steroids? For what? So, quit." And so I quit. It was simple. It was strictly business. With some guys that were using steroids, they wanted to look like that. They needed the security of having that muscled body. Without mentioning names, I remember one guy was taking like 26 cc.s a weeks. A general psycho is 3 to 5 cc.s. He was taking 26 a week and one day I pulled up in Buffalo or Rochester or one of those towns and it was snowing. He was about 360, and he's standing outside with just his trunks on, sweating his ass off. It was very, very cold, and he's just sweating. And I said, "So, how are you doing, big man?" He said, "Oh, I was just cooling down a bit, just cooling down a bit." Later on in the dressing room guys are ribbing him a little bit, and he says, "Hey, you know, whatever it takes, right Piper?" I said, "Well, I suppose yes, but no." It didn't take 26, it probably only took 5. But he needed that for his security.

For me it was strictly business. Before that I wasn't interested because I didn't like what it did to me, and then it was, "Well, Rod, you're going to have to face facts. This stuff helps you get stronger and bigger. So you'd have all the qualifications." It doesn't make you any smarter, mind you. "Then, well, wait a second, what are you doing now? Well, you're in the movies. So what do you want to take steroids for? So I can be big and strong? Well, I don't want to be big and who gives a fuck if I'm strong. I mean if I can't pick the guy up, they'll put a cable on him. So I don't need them anymore." So I didn't need them. For me, it wasn't an addiction, it was strictly business. I mean who wants to keep getting up and stabbing an inch and a half needle in your ass. It gets real old after five, six times a week, four times whatever your cycle is.

**Clark:** What is your opinion on the steroid distribution trial Vince McMahon and Titan Sports is going through right now and the charges that are against him?

**Piper:** I think that when you get into professional wrestling, at least when we all got in, you knew that the guys that made the most money were the guys that were the biggest. I have some broken bones in my body, and it's like saying, "Well, jeeze, I didn't know ten years later that I was going to have broken bones." Well, what did you expect. Somebody told me, "Yeah, Piper, but you know how to fall." Not forty times a night. What do you expect? Of course you're going to have injuries. The steroid part of it, you knew you had to be big because that's part of the drawing power of it. I have a lot of good friends that are dead, but there's this one fella who's dead now who was a real good amateur wrestler. He was 5'7" and then he started taking a bunch of steroids and got bigger but still didn't go no place. So what I'm saying is, we're all big boys and if I wouldn't take a dive for Mr. T, I don't think I would stick a needle in my ass for anybody else either. They were pointing the issue in the beginning at two guys, me and another guy. And I said, "Yeah, what of it?" And the other guy said, "No, I never," and that's why the damn thing's still going on. We're all big boys, we're all resposible for ourselves, so the whole thing's a bunch of shit.

**Clark:** We were talking about true friends in the wrestling business. So do you have a reaction or feelings about what's going on right now between Hulk Hogan and Vince McMahon, them being probably the two most powerful people ever in this business and you worked with them during their big run, with Hulk Hogan now working for WCW and now also testifying against his and your former boss, Vince McMahon?

**Piper:** I think that Hogan's doing it big time wrong. I think that he was taken care of and babied and powder-puffed and I remember him saying that he could never go against Vince and how good friends they were. And all of a sudden, he jumped ship when things get tough. I think he's the luckiest white man in the world, and for him to come back and cause this kind of strife... Unless there's something, like the FBI said to him, "Listen, we're going to put you in jail and your kids in jail, and we know where you buried the body," and I don't know what they got on him, but to turn like this, if it's just because he wants the rights to the name of Hulk Hogan, and Vince says, "No, I made Hulk Hogan." Which, he did make Hulk Hogan, that's a different situation. He didn't make Roddy Piper because Roddy Piper had been around for twelve to fifteen years or so bouncing around territories. Where Hogan hadn't done that, he had been in Minneapolis and some other place. So for him to turn like that is not only ungrateful, not that you owed him anything, but from my point of view it's stabbing him in the back. And even my enemies, I stab them straight in the throat. So I think it's completely wrong. I think whatever the thing was, they should have just dropped it. And if they go on their separate ways, say, "Okay, we're going our separate ways," and that's it. But to go through all this, all's your doing is you're hurting the sport not only for the WWF, but everybody. So I think what's going on is dead wrong.

**Clark:** But do you think from your experience and being around the wrestling business for most of your life, does that speak for what the wrestling business is all about?

**Piper:** That speaks for a lot of the guys that didn't come up the hard way. It's really indicative of people that had an easy route because they have no respect. When I was starting, people like Pat Patterson used to stay in a corner and not move because of his choice of way of living. I remember these guys around drinking beer at three in the morning, playing cards, and they said to me, "Listen, we just ordered a pizza, would you go get it for us?" Not demanding, just asking. I'd say, "Yes, I'll go get it right now," out of respect, and so I just took off and started running. Well, they meant to get the car keys and go get the pizza. But I would never say no just because I had seen what these guys went through, just out of respect for them. And when you come up that way, then you have a deep respect for your sport and the guys in it. What the shits of it is, with this trial and everything, these guys are hurting all the wrestlers. Because if wrestling died, if they outlawed it right now, the promoters are rich. So the guys that are going to suffer are the wrestlers that haven't maybe saved their money or they're just right on the brink or wherever they're at in life, but the promoters are filthy rich. Turner's rich. McMahon's rich. They don't need the money. So who's this trial hurting? And when I went in with the Grand Jury for Zahorian in the beginning, when they would ask me certain questions, "Well, wait a second, I'm just not going to cop out. I'm not going to lie, but at the same time I'm just not going to cop out because I know who I'm hurting. I'm hurting maybe Rick Martel, maybe I'm hurting Don Muroco, maybe I'm hurting Sgt. Slaughter, those are the guys I'm hurting. McMahon's limousine's going to keep running back and forth long after. So that's what they don't understand. So it's indicative of the people that didn't pay their dues.

**Clark:** And you were with that WWF during its biggest times for business, and now things are much worse. What do you think has happened with wrestling for it's popularity to consistently get lower and lower over the years?

**Piper:** The wrestlers themselves aren't taking a stance and they're not individuals anymore. They're cloning them and ideas are all coming out of the same mouth instead of somebody having the brains to sit down and be the real deal. So, consequently, what you get is just "run, Spot, run" in five different languages rather than finding where the really creative pieces of talent come from. WCW, and unfortunately WWF are following the same thing, and this is one of the things that's killing them most. On television they would always put on some poor young guy trying to come up, which I was at one time, against some huge humungous guy, and the guy would slaughter him. And then the same thing would happen with another commodity, and then they'd put those two commodities in the arenas. Let's say Muroco would kill somebody in the ring and Paul Orndorff would kill somebody in the ring, and then they would put those guys against each other inside an arena that you had to pay for. Now what they're doing is they're giving you the best matches they've got on their TV every week. "Well, shit, I've got seven hours of great matches on TV, why should I pack up my family, put them in the car, drive them down, find the parking, get the tickets, get seated, and 'Have the matches started yet?' Now we've got to home and the kids got to go to school tomorrow. Wait a second, why should I go through all that hassle? I can watch it on television for free." It's strictly financial now because they're getting so much money off the advertisements and they pay the wrestlers so little for the actual television as compared to the pay-per-view or the arena. It's more profitable to them, fuck the wrestlers.

**Clark:** For the last two or three years all that's been in the media about wrestling is all the scandals surrounding the WWF. Do you think that has hurt wrestling a lot?

**Piper:** Yeah, they had a real distasteful one with kids. I think that just about killed them. They had the ongoing steroid situation because they just never came clean at the top. So it was a festering sore that was always a form of topic when you had nothing else to talk about for the mainstream. They started calling it sports entertainment. Maybe you're sports entertainment, but I'm what I am and I will portray myself as I see fit. I don't want to be part of anybody's banner, whoever it is. I'm me. But they've done all these things. We had finally captured the respect again because we were really, really digging in. And then once we got their attention, after a while these scandals is that they saw, and they went, "Ah, fuck, we got taken." And then with like Dink and Doink and Donk and all those, it's okay if you have a program where people are laughing with you, but when you're laughing at them, absolute power corrupts absolutely.

**Clark:** I've heard stories about you dressing up incognito to avoid the fans at certain times in your career. Is that true?

**Piper:** Yeah. Never in drag, mind you, but yeah. Because of the amount of attention, you can't go any place. I'm not a limelight kind of guy. I'm actually very shy and very hermitized. I live up on a mountain. So to fly around like that, you would get swamped. So I would dress in different things so I could get around easy. It's hard to understand that the people are nice people, but you can't get anywhere. I was sitting in some airport taking a shit in the can, and this is the truth. And someone was knocking on the bathroom door, "Is that you? Can I get your autograph, Mr. Piper?" And they threw a pencil and paper underneath the door while I was taking a shit. That's about the heighth of humility. What I should have done is wiped my ass and say, "Yeah, hold this for a second," but I just signed the paper and there he went.

**Clark:** Were there certain periods in your career where you had differing attitudes towards the fans who follow wrestling?

**Piper:** Yes, but there was never a lack of respect for them. I always had respect for them. But for a long time wrestling fans hated my guts to the point where it wouldn't just stay in the arena, it would come out in the general population where I had to protect my family. There was a real wild time in my career where I was known for "Don't fuck with me." I was king of the frat house. And I got an attitude there for a while to "Just fuck everybody." It was like, one person would come up and talk nice and the next guy wanted to try you and the next guy was being a dick. So it was just "Fuck everybody, stay away from me, I'm fed up with it." But that doesn't mean I lost respect. When I say wrestling fan, I just have this concept. It's not one person, it's an accumulation of people that have supported you and made you a career. Those people, I always had the respect for. There were other individuals who are like tributaries of those, and I got a bad attitude towards people in general. I just got fed up. I was ninety days on the road doing ninety interviews a week and they were dragging me to all kinds of different places. You get an attitude to you. But then you've got to slap yourself in the head and come around.

**Clark:** Could you talk about the times where interaction with fans caused you physical harm and what do you think happened in each of those situations?

**Piper:** I was stabbed three times. I was stabbed twice in the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles and they tried to shoot me one time too. And then in Raleigh, North Carolina, I was stabbed and it came an inch from the heart. I went down in an airplane. I was going from Greenville, South Carolina to Savannah. I was wrestling in Greenville in the afternoon and I went down in an airplane and I broke my neck, but I didn't know it. My head went through the roof and they had me wrestle that night again in Savannah. I didn't know I had a broken neck for like five years. Same thing with my left wrist, it broke. I've been in I don't know how many car accidents, it's in the twentys, because of various things, only one to be fatigue. That and I have no idea how many out of the ring fights I've been in, just going into 7-11's wherever I happen to be, and a couple of real serious ones. So it takes a toll on you physically, and mentally it really takes a toll on you. It gives you real bad attitudes. When everybody's booing you all the time and hating your guts all the time and you get stabbed three times and go down in a plane, and they don't give a fuck, "Get in there and wrestle." Yeah, okay, I guess I'm pretty much a piece of meat. So where's my loyalties lie to? Well, finally I figured it out, they lie to my family.

**Clark:** I've also heard you used to be quite a crazy man on the road. Could you tell me a little bit about your times on the road?

**Piper:** I don't know who was the wildest. I guess I was the wildest, that's how the story goes. There was the first annual demolition derby with brand new Cadillacs at the 2,001 with George Scott, who was a booker, with his son at that time. Jack Brisco had his foot in a cast and it was about 3:00 in the morning. And Byron Scott said to me, "My dad made you everything you are." And so I put my fist through his windshield and jumped in a car to ram him. He had a Cadillac also. Brisco was jumping in my car and my wheel was turned all the way to the lefthand side and I didn't know it. And Jack was getting in, but he had a cast on his foot. He was reaching to close the door and I hit the gas, but because the car's wheels were turned, it just fish-tailed and Jack went out the door. I tried to grab him and we both went out the door and the car turned and beautifully smashed right into Byron Scott's car. Stuff like that. It was a lot of ruffian stuff. I tore up Fresno. I remember coming into Fresno and I was with a couple other guys and we were in a rent-a-car and I was a passenger for a change. Somehow we hit these railway tracks and the car went sideways on the railway tracks, and there was like three or four sets of tracks. The car's wheels were off the ground, so two of us got in the back and we were going to lift the car up and one of the guys got in the front to drive. So he bounces it into drive and the tires were just low enough to start kicking up these railway pebbles and they're knocking the shit out of us. And all of sudden here comes the train, so we all kind of backed off and thought, "Well, this might be kind of neat." But the train was on two tracks over, so it missed the car. So the guy that rented the car, we all said fuck it, and he phoned the company and said somebody had stolen the car. We got split up and by the time we got back to the Hyatt, it was full of cops. The one guy that got away from us was upstairs in the fifth or sixth floor and all the rooms overlooked the lobby. So the cops had this other guy and myself down there, and I hadn't checked in yet and the other two fellas had. So the cops were going to take us away and I took one cop down and this other guy that was upstairs was naked. He opened the door and he got locked out. So now he's in the hallway naked, and the cops rush up to get him, and he's a pretty big boy. So this one black cop shoots two darts in his tummy. And he pulls them out and says, "You stinkin', fucking nigger," and he goes after the cops. So they come down and the elevator opens on the first floor and here's this naked buddy of mine and two cops wrestling him. I jumped in, and I was the only one that went to jail because I wasn't checked into the hotel. Every night stuff like that happened.

**Clark:** What calmed you down?

**Piper:** Oh, about the fifth kid. That and after you do so much stuff it got old for me. It got old going out and tearing places up and doing all that bologna. Plus, I got married. There's a saying, you've got to have a license to hunt, you need a license to fish, but any jerkoff can be a dad. In that area when you have kids, you've got a choice. You can either be a good pop or you can just be a piece of dirt. I didn't want my kids to have a piece of dirt, and so between that and my wife, it turned it around.

**Clark:** What were your most memorable moments of your career as a professional wrestler?

**Piper:** One thing I always did was stick up for my people, the people of my sport. Whether I liked them or not, it didn't matter, I stuck up for them. To this day there's not too many people that will say too many bad things about me and I managed to get their respect. Like when I was in the Garden for Wrestlemania 10, Razor Ramon came up and said to me, "Hello, Mr. Piper. You won't remember, but I met you in St. Louis when I had just been wrestling for about six months. And I said hello to you and I said that I've just been wrestling six months." But over the time I've never been this local stooge and so when I come back and say hello, there's nobody that doesn't know what I've been through and they're always real nice to me. And I think that is more important to me than anything that happened in front of the camera. If it was something in front of the camera, what I would be proud of would be the creation of Piper's Pit. The only reason it stopped is because I got tired of it and I quit it. That and the fact that I started the WWF by "The War to Settle the Score" and the first Wrestlemania. What people don't understand, unless you're people that are in my sport, it doesn't matter how much a guy wants to smile and flex his muscles, unless there's somebody (the fans) really fucking hate, and they really believe it's a contest, you don't have a match. I managed to get the lady that was running for vice president of the strongest country in the world, Geraldine Ferraro, on down to all these music icons. To start that from a business that had been shunned, I take that as an accomplishment and I'm proud of that. You know, it was like breaking a world record. So that was a good moment for me. It changed the business. And I was hoping for the right direction, but hindsight's 20/20. For a lot of wrestlers that were starving and had no other place to go, right away it brought it so far up into the limelight that for hundreds and hundreds of other people just through serendipity, they came along on the ride and made a ton of money. In essence, what people don't understand is when you're a main eventer, you're responsibility is not only to get ratings and TV and stuff, but you as a schooled athlete in the sport, are also responsible for the other guys. There's a guy that's on the first match that is just as important who has a family to feed and if you don't sell that place out or draw real good, he doesn't take any money home. So you have a responsibility to all the other guys and to yourself and to the promoter, and that's the way you should look at it. And these guys don't understand that anymore.

**Clark:** You've made a living and a career performing for people, in wrestling and now more recently in movies and TV. What have you gotten out of this both financially and personally?

**Piper:** Financially, I don't have to work another day in my life if I don't want to. Personally, I'm lucky I'm alive. Personally, that's a tough question because a lot of the things that I did aren't things that I want my kids to know. I'm a worldly person, I suppose I got that out of it. And I have a lot of compassion for the underdog at all times. It's taught me, instead of just shunning some fella, to take the time for somebody that hasn't been as lucky as you are. Because let's face it, a lot of it is luck too. And it makes you a little bit of a better human being because you've gone through all the phases. The first five years it's cool and you're being asked for autographs, you get to the ten year mark and you think you're somebody, and you get to the fifteen year mark and you find out you're nobody, and then you start to settle down and realize how lucky you are. So to accept other people around and to actually want to help other people. Believe me, I'm the furthest thing from an angel there can be and not be on the hell side, but it has taught me maybe not to be quite so selfish and to be able to give to others. Also because of the notoriety, you can go into a hospital, Dornbecker Hospital here in Portland, Oregon, and it's a hospital for kids where doctors can work on them all day. I've had kids on the phone, one kid in particular that actually died on the phone talking to me, and he was telling me what it was like to die and he was telling me what he was feeling. And then the nurse took the phone and then he's dead. Well, those kids, if you just give a little bit of your time to them, you can do more for those kids than the doctors can. You know, God takes care of fools and babies. It's important for what you've reaped and raped from the country, it's important to give it back. Now you give people a little more slack. I have some guy twenty-five years old, bench pressing 500 pounds, who said, "I might be able to kick your ass." Well, ten years ago I would have been on top of him, but now I just kind of let it go, as long as you don't touch my wallet or my family. So it was such a rough business and it teaches you a lot of compassion for other people. And you also are extremely street smart, you're real hard to trick.

**Clark:** What effects has your years in the wrestling business had on your body and your health, including injuries you have suffered and/or problems you are experiencing?

**Piper:** I'm pretty banged up that way. The organs are fine, but they've been wanting to replace my right hip for three years. My neck broke, my left wrist broke, and my right shoulder's rotator cuff has been torn in half for I don't know how long. Other than that, I'm fine. I hit hard, I hit the turnbuckles hard, I did everything hard, and it has taken a real toll on my body and my mind a little bit too. I am a little dingy.

**Clark:** How often are you working out these days and what are you doing to keep in excellent shape?

**Piper:** I work out about two or three hours a day. I jump in the pool, I hit the bag, train on the weights, spar. I've done three movies with a guy that was seven times karate champion of the world and he's supposed to be one of the best martial artists ever. I sparred quite a bit with him. It's real interesting too because he's a sucker for some things and I'm a sucker for other things, so that's kind of cool. I continue with those types of things to keep myself active. I've always been an athlete, it's just something that's in me. So I train quite extensively.

**Clark:** What is your future as far as your involvement in the professional wrestling business?

**Piper:** I'm doing this Bottom Line more for the ideas and I'm really trying to give something back. Also, I don't like what's going on with the WWF and the WCW. WCW had called me and McMahon called me and I was going back and forth. And I'm really doing it more for, "Hey guys, some of us aren't just whores. Some of us are real deal people." I try to send messages that are the proper messages. As far as getting back in the ring, I wouldn't now unless it was a big championship match and that would just be ego. My next thing that I want to do is I want to win an Oscar. I've done three movies this year. I have two more, and then I have a baby coming on November 22, so I'll stay home until sometime into the new year. Then there's three more features, and that's all I know of so far. I'm not interested in doing too much television, I'm more interested in doing features and I want to see if I can't conquer that business. I also have an album contract with A&M records.

**Clark:** I remember you telling me much earlier in the interview that when Henry Winkler and Carl Reiner asked you to do another movie after *The One and Only*, you told them no because you were on your way in wrestling. Are you now on your way in the movie industry?

**Piper:** Absolutely. Yeah, and I can feel it. I'm judging it the exact same way I'm judging wrestling. I've never come out the gate fast, but I'm real hard to stop and I have a real determination. But I'm honest with myself. And I can feel it. Each project gets better and I'm not trying to lay on "I'm Roddy Piper from wrestling," I'm actually down-playing that. It's human. Anybody can do it if you just put your mind to it. The trouble was getting in the door and getting rid of the big dumb wrestler idea that Hollywood has against wrestling. They don't like it. But that's their problem. So for the next five, six years I'll gauge it and if I haven't done it by then, then I just won't do anything else, I'll just enjoy my family.

**Clark:** Are you busier than you were while going on the road full-time for wrestling?

**Piper:** I'm busier mentally, not physically. I don't think it's possible to be busier physically. The sun never sets on the WWF or on wrestling. My schedule, for instance, is I leave Sunday for Toronto. I begin principle photography Monday. It's all night shooting. And then I have an album within the eight weeks that I have to have completed for A&M Records. So I'll be doing that at the same time. Then I go into the next feature that's in Los Angeles. So the hours are as consuming, but it's more mental. I have to keep myself in shape physically for the camera, but mentally it's much tougher because in wrestling everything just comes right off the top of my head. I don't think too much before I go out there. But for the movies, obviously there's a large script and you have lines and you have to get yourself into a state of believability for whoever the character is. It takes more intelligence, only for memorization, not business-wise, and it's much more disciplined. So I'm busier from that aspect, but as far as just get down gut work, I don't think it could have gotten any harder than it was in '84, '85, '86. I'd be in a hotel room and they would rent a hotel room right next to me and set it up as a studio and literally pull me out of bed and throw me in front of the camera and I'd kick off forty to sixty interviews, and then send me to the arena. I would never work on Christmas, so McMahon said, "Alright, I'll have a jet waiting for you in Hillsboro. You have Christmas with your family, and then Christmas night you'll be in Detroit." So, physically, I don't think it could have got any harder in any sport.

**Clark:** Now, at this time, are WWF and WCW wanting you to return and work full time for them?

**Piper:** Oh yeah, I get a call from both of them once a month or once every six weeks. There's a guy named Eric (pauses) Bischoff, I think his name is, and McMahon, of course, calls. I'm straight up with everybody and I tell them exactly how I feel and what I feel they're doing.

**Clark:** Do you want to discuss that idea that you had for them that we spoke about before?

**Piper:** Yeah, sure.

**Clark:** Did you suggest it to them, though?

**Piper:** No, no, I didn't suggest it to them because I know they would have gone for it. And then where would I have been? (locked into doing it) My idea was, first of all, between Flair, eleven times world champion, and Hogan has played every card he knows. You know, after the leg drop and the toilet seat haircut going up and down, it's just about over. So I thought that with having just done a high profile thing on the WWF, and having a program that really would draw money now, because there's only a couple combinations that I think would draw money. I think that if I was right now to walk right on TBS, the studio I know oh so well, and right on camera slap Flair and Hogan upside the head and say, "We are the three best, let's have the best against the best." It would be one person in the corner and two people would start wrestling for two or three minutes. At that time the guy on the outside would come in and one of the two guys would leave. You would just keep switching off and on until one person got beat. It would get down to two people, one guy got beat, and then you'd have yourself a world champion. That's the only match you'd need on a pay-per-view and with a match like that there's no telling how long it would go. I think because of the names involved and the peculiarity of it that it would draw an enormous amount of money. Where you'd go from there, I don't know.

**Clark:** Now you'll probably get another call from Eric Bischoff wanting to do this idea.

**Piper:** Yeah. (laughs) And I'll say, "Hey, Eric, how you doing? You're ratings are dropping, you still got a job?"

**Clark:** But what are some of the similarities and differences in performing and working in the wrestling business as compared to show business that you're getting more and more into now?

**Piper:** One, wrestling is explosion, acting is implosion. They're completely different and that's why wrestlers are lousy actors because they're too wide and they're too big. When they go to say something, their eyes bug out and they scream, and when you're on a forty foot screen in a theater, that even makes you bigger. Where acting is what you and the character are feeling inside. So instead of saying it or portraying it, you just feel it. We're human beings. Some people have the ability to read other people. I'm pretty good at reading people. I'm pretty good at coming into a room and I kind of know where everybody's coming from. Acting is feeling something in your guts and your heart, and that's coming out through your eyes and you're projecting it. If you look at actors, they're pretty stone-faced, you don't see many mugging actors, with the exception of *Pet Detective*, there's always exceptions to the rule. When you're talking Oscars and Academy Awards, that's all from inside and you have to learn how to feel it and bring it out of your eyes. So what you're doing is you're really feeling it, where in wrestling you're just going for it. And people say wrestlers are just actors, that's the biggest lie in the world. Because if that's the truth, why aren't we taking over Hollywood? When actually myself and Hogan are the only guys that are still working at it.

**Clark:** Based on that, how little of a crossover do you think there is from pro wrestling to show business?

**Piper:** None, none. First of all, not many are disciplined enough to put the time in. Not many of them are secure enough to lose all that weight and strength that they put on to change their whole lifestyle, let alone go into another evil world and have to learn their Ps and Qs and what's right and wrong and then concentrate on your craft. The biggest problem I have is, when I go onto a set, I can't get people to stop talking to me about wrestling. So I literally hide all the time, of course I guess I'm that kind of guy anyway. Somebody will be doing wardrobe, they're just getting ready to go, you're on the set and they're puffing and fluffing and roughing you, and some jerk's talking about wrestling when you're just about to do a scene with your dead dog or something. Again, going back to what wrestling did for me personally, I can't say to that guy, "Hey, I don't care," so I just put up with it and listen to it and that really disciplines you into focusing on what you're doing.

**Clark:** Which one of those fields gives you or gave you the most enjoyment and satisfaction?

**Piper:** (pauses) I'm not schooled enough in acting, I haven't reached that point. I think there's two different kinds of satisfaction. Like there's a movie out right now, *Forrest Gump*, I would love to play that part. There's a movie called *From Mice and Men*, George and Lenny, Lenny being the kind of slow guy. I would love to play a part like that. Those types of parts in the future will give me that type of satisfaction. I would like to play Father Flannigan on *Boys Town* on the updated version. Those kinds of things where you would be able to see the other side of me, so they could see the full human being. I think the satisfaction will come if, god willing, I do excel in acting. At the end of it all, and you go take a look at a tape of 1976 in Charlotte, and then you take a tape of 1996 of a really good movie, and you go, "Wait a second, this guy is just more than just a big yelling jerk," I think that's the moment of satisfaction. I'm not sure I have achieved it (satisfaction) in either one until I prove myself in both.

**Clark:** Do you think that in a sense is kind of like maturing is some ways for you right now?

**Piper:** That's a good question. I think it's got to do with ego, in the sense that one thing that bothers me is when people just think that you are just that "wrestler guy." Where, no, I can play the piano, I can play the harmonica, I'm a dad, I can play bagpipes, and all kinds of stuff. There's so many more facets and they only know this one and they categorize you so strongly in that one. So if that's ego or wanting to prove yourself or wanting to say, "Hey, can't you see me for more than what I am," I feel that missing. I'm not afraid to open myself up, my life's an open book. When they see that, maybe it has to do with maturity, but it also has to do with making a statement as a public figure of "You're not giving me enough credit here."

**Clark:** Could you tell me a little bit about your family and how you handled the whole wrestling deal with them?

**Piper:** I blocked everything off my satellite (TV). I don't think all my kids have ever seen me in wrestling. Just a couple of times on the news every once in a while when something would come up and they would see me fight. One time I remember somebody was bleeding who I was hitting and one of my older kids, they got scared because they'd never seen me like that. I don't hit nobody in my family, I don't believe in it. They got scared and they were like, "Holy cow, I've never seen him like that." And so that really made me aware of it. You know, there's nothing worse than living in a house and being afraid. You've got to walk through that door and if everyday as a kid the best part of your day is walking out of the house and the worst part of your day is having to walk back into that house everyday, that's a living hell. And to put your family through that, you really have to be a bad person. And so I never wanted my family to do that, so I've been very protective of my family. A couple times they've been on camera, but very, very seldom. I don't think anybody knows what my family looks like and I never use them for promotion. I know Flair did a thing with his kids and stuff. Well, wait a second, what happened to the Nature Boy running nude in the woods? So, now you're daddy? You see, I've been the same guy all the time. I wasn't running around, I was taking care of my family and I was sending my checks--the ones I remembered--home. That part, I've always taken really good care of my family. They don't need anything, they've got everything they want in life. So that part I dig.

**Clark:** What kind of an effect do you think you being a pro wrestler and being on the road all the time had on your kids and your wife?

**Piper:** In the beginning it was very hard, but then it made us appreciate each other and made us a closer family. Because when we're home we are very close and it's been instilled in my family to always cover each other's backs no matter what because you can only trust your family. We take care of each other. When Dad's away, there's faxes, they all fax me their own little letter. And Dad faxes them back and Dad calls four or five times everyday without fail. So there's never, "Oh, he's gone for a month and we don't hear from him." It's never like that. It's always "How you doing?" and there's always flowers sent, there's always that type of communication. When I was wrestling I admit that I was gone much more, but they were much younger also. Now that they've grown up, like I take months off between projects now. Absence makes a heart grow fonder too, you know, familiarity breeds contempt. And with kids, it's like anything else, if Dad's looming all the time, all the time, it's like, "Hey, when is this guy going to give us a break?" Where the way I have it is, "Hey, Dad's coming home," it's an exciting thing. Mum's the stability for us, she's really a together lady. So it makes for a perfect family situation. I'll be gone five weeks--but then I'll be home two months--and they'll hear from me; everyday I talk to them.

**Clark:** So you've found quite a happy medium in your life between your career and your family?

**Piper:** Yeah, but my family's more important to me than anything. I would give up everything if it was interfering in any way with my family. As my children get a little older, they need more attention, as they're getting into their teens and their late teens. They are starting to pick routes of life they want to go and that's when it's important to "Okay, do what you want to do, but you ain't going to be nothing that I ain't thought of, for sure." So as we wind it down, my goal is to do maybe one or two pictures a year, and that's it for the rest of my life. Right now I must pay my dues and do five or six pictures and get over to the point where I can choose what I want to do. And that's my goal. It's going to take me another year, but I think in another year, year and a half, I'll have it accomplished.

**Clark:** You could say that you went from poverty to stardom in your life. How do you think the money and the notoriety you have achieved in your life has changed you as a person?

**Piper:** They used to call me "Patches Piper," I hated that. I don't wear fancy jewelry. I have a Rolex because I was taught years ago for dealing with promoters--this is old school and everybody that was on top had them--you had a Rolex, a haliberd, and a pair of deer boots, and you can wear whatever else you want to. Other than that, I wear jeans just about all the time and I don't spend money on myself because it's just the way I am. So money to me doesn't mean anything, as long as I don't have a shortage of it. But as long as my family's got everything they want or need and I can take them any place I want to at any time, how much more money do you need? Everything's paid. People that change because of money were never real people in the beginning. So money has never really meant anything to me. It really hasn't.

**Clark:** As far as all that you have achieved in your life?

**Piper:** It's given me a confidence that nobody can take away. The achievements, because it's an individual business, it gives you a confidence where there's nobody that can intimidate you anymore in life, from the FBI, the Grand Jury, to anybody. So as a father, when you go out, you're never intimidated. So somebody's going to tell me, "Oh, jeeze, we went out last night and we drank twenty-four beers and we didn't get home till 3:00 in the morning." (sarcastically) Oh boy, isn't that exciting? You're hard to impress... Rather, you're easy to impress if you're just being a regular guy and you're being just honest, then you find that you need to be real easy to get along with. If you're high for loot, then I probably would have nothing to do with you.